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Changes in Family Structure, Barriers to Family Functioning, and Intergenerational Conflicts in Korean Families



Yu-Kyung Kim

Changes in Family Structure, Barriers to
Family Functioning, and Intergenerational
Conflicts in Korean Families

Yu-Kyung Kim, Research Fellow

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Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs
Building D, 370 Sicheong-daero, Sejong city
30147 KOREA

<http://www.kihasa.re.kr>

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1

Introduction

1. Necessity and Purpose of the Study
2. Content and Method of the Study

1. Necessity and Purpose of the Study

As Korea has undergone rapid industrialization and is transitioning to a post-industrialized society, family structure and function are also changing at a fast pace due to complex factors such as individualism, increase in elderly population, late marriage, increase in divorce rate, and low birth rate, etc. As of 2012, the percentage of elderly people in the total population was 11.7%, indicating the start of an aging society. The average age at first marriage increased from 29.3 years for men and 26.5 years for women in 2000 to 32.13 and 29.41 respectively in 2012. In addition, there have been early divorces: 2.5 cases per thousand in 2000 and 2.3 cases per thousand in 2012. Meanwhile, the birth rate has been gradually decreasing from 1.47 children per family in 2000 to 1.30 in 2012. Due to such changes in the population structure and demographic dynamics, smaller and more nuclear families have become commonplace, weakening the family welfare function due to the vacuum of family functions such as childcare and elder care.

In the meantime, conflicts among family members are to be expected because of weakened family functions resulting from weakened family values, decreased family size, and simplified

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household composition. In particular, there is an increase in the number of families that are exposed to modern social risks, including the aging of the head of household or the increasing number of households headed by women, as well as issues related to working couples, single parents, etc. The average age of the household head has gradually increased from 44.5 years of age in 2000 to 49.0 in 2010; the gender distribution among household heads indicates the continuing increase of female heads: 81.5% of household heads were men and 18.5% were women in 2000, but in 2010, 74.1% of household heads were men and 25.9% were women. Working-couple families also continued to increase from 35.4% in 2000 to 40.1% in 2009. Single parent homes also increased, moving from 9.4% in 2000 to 12.3% in 2010.

As such, the decrease in family values and increase in working-couple families make the absence of family function (e.g., support and care) more obvious; pervasive individualism, mixed gender roles, and a lack of communication between generations are likely to worsen the family conflicts between spouses as well as between generations, which is expected to lead to broken families. Weakened family function and increased family conflicts can be a main cause of social problems such as divorce, separation, and at-risk adolescents, raising the concern that these problems will result in long-term social costs.

Because family conflicts due to societal change can lead to broken families and create social costs, it is necessary to establish policies to increase family values and solve family crisis situations in order to prevent broken families.

The present study aims to diagnose the patterns of relational and functional family conflicts and problems, derive policy implications, and provide fundamental data to establish national policy on this matter.

2. Content and Method of the Study

The present study is composed of five chapters, including an introduction and four main chapters. The main content of each chapter is as follows.

Chapter 2 covers theoretical background related to intergenerational conflicts. Chapter 3 analyzes the patterns of family conflicts related to intergenerational relationships and derives policy implications. Chapter 4 diagnoses functional family conflicts, and Chapter 5 derives policy implications for family conflicts centering around family conflict theories and intergenerational and functional conflict patterns.

The research method for this study is as follows. This study examined previous literature in order to define the concept of family conflict and analyze its causes; we have also used the population and housing census and statistics related to family conflicts surveyed by Statistics Korea; in addition, this study

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used previous survey data related to family conflicts and conducted phone interviews with 2,000 members of the general public¹⁾ to analyze intergenerational and functional conflict patterns.

1) Targeting 1,000 members of the general public, two rounds of telephone interviews were conducted: 「Survey on attitudes toward spouse, siblings, work and family conflicts」 and 「Survey on attitudes toward intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance within the family」. The participants were male and female adults in Korea between ages 19 and 69; the survey was conducted for 12 days, from August 21, 2014, to September 1, 2014.

2

Theoretical Background

1. Concept and Types of Family Conflict
2. Causes of Family Conflict

2

Theoretical Background <<

1. Concept and Types of Family Conflict

1) Concept and Scope of Family Conflict

Scholars are currently engaged in various discussions on family conflicts. Family conflict can be defined as rage, aggression, and collision of opinions expressed openly among family members (Moos & Moss, 1994); a psychologically unstable state due to conflicts that arise in the process of distributing authority and economic resources among the household members (Kim, 1993; Cheon & Sung, 2008); or a problem that has occurred due to sociocultural, psychological, behavioral, or cognitive disharmony among family members (Noh et al., 2010). Some scholars have defined family conflict in relation to caring for family members. Semple (1992) defined it as fighting or extreme hostility between the family caregiver and his or her spouse or siblings or the family members who are not involved in giving care. In addition, there is another argument that the level of family conflict should be understood from the family's perspective when assessing families with dependents, because caregiving is strongly influenced by the composition of a family (Mary & Susan, 1997; Lynn & Babara, 2008).

Apart from this, some studies approach family conflicts in terms of relational conflicts and functional conflicts. “Relational” family conflict is the state in which two or more family members have clashing desires (Galvin & Brommel, 1986), whereas “functional” family conflict can be defined as a clash of desires, goals, or roles with surrounding circumstances in the process of performing family functions such as caring for and supporting family members financially. A family is a type of social group whose members have different desires, expectations, and goals, but who share daily life and resources and pursue shared goals and futures, all while trying to meet one’s own desires, expectations, and goals. Therefore, the predominant viewpoint holds that family conflicts are inevitable and natural.

For this reason, the present study will include functional family conflicts in addition to relational conflicts in the concept and scope of family conflict.

2) Types of Family Conflict

Based on the extant theoretical discussion, this study will classify family conflicts into relational family conflicts and functional family conflicts. Relational family conflict is defined as the state in which two or more family members believe that their desires clash with one another (Galvin & Brommel, 1986). Relational conflicts can be sub-categorized into the following:

(1) “spouse conflict” between two people in a married couple; (2) “intergenerational conflict” between an older generation and a younger generation (parents and children in adolescent years, young adulthood, or adulthood; grandparents and grandchildren); or (3) “sibling conflict” between siblings or a spouse’s siblings.

In the meantime, functional family conflict is defined as conflict that occurs when there is a clash of desires, goals, and roles with surrounding circumstances in the process of performing crucial family functions such as childcare, elder care, and financial support. The sub-categories for functional conflict include (1) “care conflict between parents and adult children,” such as adult children supporting elderly parents or vice versa (parents supporting children in adulthood), and (2) “work-family conflict,” which may be experienced when simultaneously performing the role of financial provider and the role of child caregiver.

<Table 2-1> Type and scope of family conflict

| Domain and types | Relational conflict | | | Functional conflict | |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|--|
| | Conflict between spouses | Intergenerational conflict | Conflict between siblings | Conflict between parent and adult children over family care and inheritance | Work-family conflict |
| Scope | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couple with various conflicts • Conflict between spouses in late adulthood /elderly divorces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between parents and children (adolescents/ young adult children/adult children) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between siblings over caring for elderly parents, inheritance, holidays/memorial services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over caring for elderly parents and inheritance • Conflict over adult children’s dependence on | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts between working couple with young children |

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| Domain and types | Relational conflict | | | Functional conflict | |
|------------------|--------------------------|--|--|---|----------------------|
| | Conflict between spouses | Intergenerational conflict | Conflict between siblings | Conflict between parent and adult children over family care and inheritance | Work-family conflict |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conflicts with in-laws •Conflicts between grandparents and grandchildren | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conflict with siblings-in-law | parents (boomerang kids, grandparenting) | |

2. Causes of Family Conflict

The causes of family conflicts can be diagnosed from an ecological perspective at various levels, including the individual, family, and society levels (Gross et al., 1980).

At the individual level, the causes and aspects of family conflicts are manifested differently based on the phase of a person's life. Parents who have children still in childhood need to invest considerable time, energy, and material resources into their children. Working parents have to maintain both parenting and economic activities within the scope of their limited time, energy, and material resources, so they are highly likely to experience work-family conflict. Adolescence is the second individuation²⁾, and conflicts occur between the teenage child

2) Second individuation is characterized with the process through which adolescent children no longer regard their parents as "all-knowing and all-powerful" but start to view their parents from a realistic point of view; during this period, adolescent children either distance themselves from their parents or rebel against their parents, or become deeply involved in their peer group and display deviant behavior (Blos, 1967).

who tries to get away from his or her parents and the parents who try to control their children, a common occurrence in many cultures. Children in early adulthood or emerging adulthood manifest ambivalence, showing both dependence on and independence from their parents in the transitional process of becoming autonomous and independent adults. Such ambivalence causes confusion in young adults in terms of the parent-child relationship and has the potential to create intergenerational conflicts such as parent-children conflicts. Children in middle adulthood are vulnerable to family conflicts from both directions because they have to support children in adolescence or young adulthood while also supporting elderly parents. People in late adulthood can experience conflicts regarding financial support exchanged between elderly parents and adult children, when the amount of support given by one party does not meet the requirement or expectation of the other.

Individual personality or health conditions can also cause family conflicts. Such conflict-generating personality or mental health characteristics may include low self-esteem, insecure attachment, depression, neurosis, anxiety, avoidance, dependence, stress, controlling personality, lack of self-control, difficult temperament, violence, addiction, selfishness, immaturity, etc. Furthermore, a low self-differentiation³⁾ level has been fre-

3) Self-differentiation, at a personal level, is the ability to appropriately control

quently mentioned in the field of family counseling as a major cause of family conflicts (Chung & Lee, 2004; Han, 2007). One example is family conflict related to supporting adult “boomerang” children who have failed to separate from their parents and may depend heavily on their parents. Another example is a conflict with in-laws due to parents who identify themselves with their adult children, failing to acknowledge them as independent human beings.

Conflicts at the family level include those triggered by life events. “Life events” refer to major events that bring a significant and drastic change to family life, such as getting married, giving birth, children going to school, children becoming adolescents, children getting married, retiring, a spouse’s death, etc. When a family experiences sudden change from such events, its members undergo stress while trying to adapt to the new environment and circumstances, which raises the potential for family conflict. Income and assets are important resources that help people cope with the source of stress or changes in life. When a family is experiencing financial difficulty due to low income or a small amount of assets, there may be tension in family relationships or they may experience a challenge to performing family functions; therefore, this situation has a high risk of turning into a relational or functional

and separate oneself from one’s emotions through reasoning; at the interpersonal level, it is the ability to maintain relationships (such as family relationships) and autonomy.

family conflict. You may wish to delete this altogether, and simply make this passage read “Although differences in personality, opinions, and expectations or disharmony among family members can provide an opportunity to respect such differences and to complement one another, developing a healthier relationship, nonetheless, it can cause family conflict as well.

However, differences in personality, opinions, and expectations or disharmony among family members can also provide an opportunity to respect such differences and to complement one another, developing a healthier relationship. Nonetheless, it can cause family conflict as well.

According to symbolic interactionism, a family is a group of individuals that constantly interact with one another by using verbal or non-verbal symbols. Therefore, family interactions such as verbal and non-verbal communication are the key to a good family relationship. Positive interaction can promote the health of a family, while negative interaction can directly or indirectly cause family conflicts. If the manner of an interaction such as communication is adverse or if the interaction itself is lacking, it is highly likely to become a family conflict. In the field of family counseling, a person’s negative experience in his or her family of origin is an important cause of relational family conflict. Any negative experience or scars (such as those from violence, abuse, conflict, absence of affection or role models, etc.) from one’s family of origin, the group one was

born to, may have a very negative impact on various relational conflicts between spouses, generations, and siblings.

Social causes of family conflict include undemocratic gender relationships. Undemocratic and hierarchical gender relationships are a significant factor in relational and functional family conflicts. The hierarchical gender relationship and patriarchal system that placed men over women in Korean society was reinforced in the mid-Joseon Dynasty; the tradition of strictly keeping a distance between men and women joined the dichotomous rule of public versus private domain during industrialization and established a powerful gender role ideology and the one-man provider model. This is reflected in the practice of gender-categorized childcare, elder care, and holiday and memorial service culture; it can result in sibling conflict, inheritance conflict, work-family conflict, and more.

The generational gap is a primary potential cause for both relational (intergenerational) and functional (regarding inheritance or adult children's care of elderly parents) conflicts. Family members from different generations (e.g., parents and children; grandparents and grandchildren; parents-in-law and daughters- or sons-in-law) grew up in different social environments and are more likely to experience disagreement or disharmony.

In addition, another cause of conflict is sociological ambivalence⁴), which is the coexistence of clashing norms between

generations. This can explain intergenerational conflicts, in that clashing norms regarding family roles coexist with current expectations, creating ambivalent emotions and conflicts (Connidis & McMullin, 2002). In other words, the parent generation or grandparent generation expects vertical intergenerational relationships based on generation hierarchy, but the children's generation or grandchildren's generation often expects democratic and equal intergenerational relationships, which can lead to conflict between generations within the family.

The changes in population structure due to low birth rates and population aging also play an indirect role in relational and functional family conflicts. Population aging can potentially result in a conflict between elderly parents and adult children; a low birth rate and a declining number of children can result in an increase of conflict between parents and adult children due to focused investment and high expectations; the extended education of children and late marriage will likely increase conflicts related to supporting adult children.

4) Sociological ambivalence refers to the "expectation of norms that cannot coexist regarding attitude, belief, and behavior" or the "clash of expected norms in socially defining the roles" (Merton & Barber, 1963: 94-95, 99).

3

Intergenerational Conflict Patterns

1. Viewpoint on Childcare and Elder Care
2. Parent–Children Conflict Patterns
3. Summary and Implications

3

Intergenerational Conflict << Patterns

1. Viewpoint on Childcare and Elder Care

Arising from challenges in parenting, various factors such as parenting philosophy and communication affect the conflicts between parents and children.

According to the 2014 telephone survey on viewpoints regarding children, the percentage of participants who agreed that it is important for adult children to get married and have children (85.5%) was 6.2 times higher than the percentage of the participants who disagreed (13.9%). When asked if children are needed for their old age, 53.1% of participants agreed, while 46.4% disagreed. When asked if their children's success is their success, 51.8% of participants agreed and 47.2% disagreed. When asked if children are their priority, 49.6% of the participants agreed; a similar percentage, 49.2%, of participants disagreed. Thus, we see that on the value of forming a family by marrying and having children, more participants agreed than disagreed, whereas with regard to the necessity of having children for their old age, identification with their children's success, and their children being their priority, only half of participants agreed. This indicates that a children-focused mentality is gradually changing to a couple/parents-focused mentality.

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<Table 3-1> Viewpoint on children

(Unit: %, person, point)

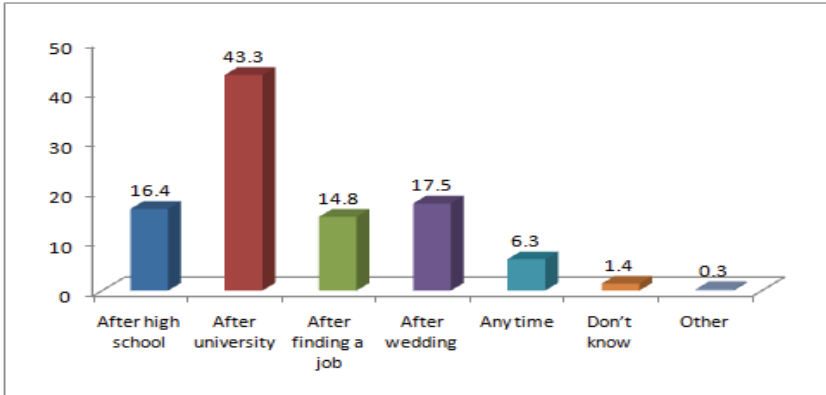
| Category | Strongly disagree | Slightly disagree | Slightly agree | Strongly agree | Not sure | Total (number) | Average |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------|----------------|---------|
| It is important for adults to get married and have children. | 2.6 | 11.3 | 34.3 | 51.2 | 0.6 | 100.0(1,000) | 3.35 |
| Children are necessary for old age. | 9.3 | 37.1 | 32.8 | 20.3 | 0.5 | 100.0(1,000) | 2.64 |
| My child's success is my success. | 12.1 | 35.1 | 34.8 | 17.0 | 1.0 | 100.0(1,000) | 2.57 |
| Children are my priority. | 8.9 | 40.3 | 36.1 | 13.5 | 1.2 | 100.0(1,000) | 2.55 |

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

According to the telephone survey on the period of parenthood, most participants (43.3%) mentioned “up to college graduation,” followed by “up to the wedding ceremony” (17.5%), “up to high school graduation” (16.4%), “up to employment” (14.8%), and “always” (6.3%). In the past, the period of parenthood was considered to be “up to the point of finishing school,” but recently, the parenthood period appears to be extending to “up to the wedding” and “up to employment.”

[Figure 3-1] Viewpoint on the period of parenthood

(Unit: %)

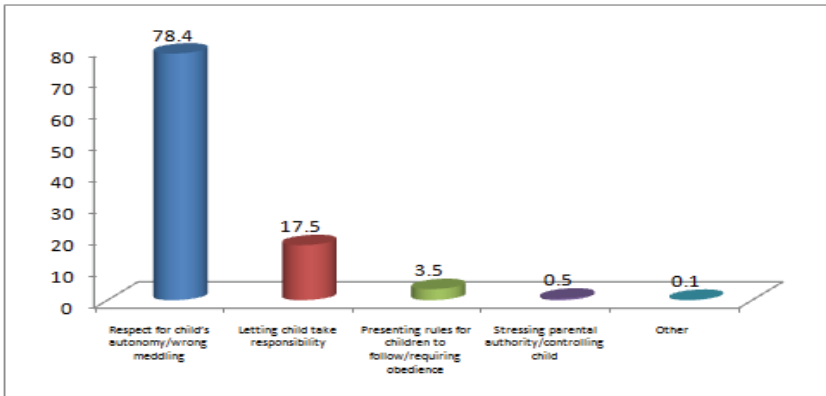


Note: The target of analysis is 1,000 members of the general public.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

[Figure 3-2] Viewpoint on ideal parenting

(Unit: %)



Note: The target of analysis is 1,000 members of the general public.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

According to the telephone survey on ideal parenting, the majority of people (78.4%) mentioned that they are generally permissive but stern with their children for wrongdoings. There were, however, parents who leave everything up to their children so that their children may make their own choices and face the consequences (17.5%). Other responses were insignificant.

2. Parent-Children Conflict Patterns

1) Relationship and Conflict Patterns between Parents and Adolescent/Young Adult Children (ages 15-24)

The 2014 telephone survey on the relationship between parents and adolescent/young adult children (15-24 years) did not show much difference by age group; however, the survey results showed that parents find the group of children from 18-24 years slightly more reliable and easier to communicate with than the group of children from 15-17 years. However, many parents find the group of children from 15-17 years understandable. This indicates that the majority of parents have a close and positive relationship with their children in adolescence and early adulthood.

〈Table 3-2〉 Relationship between parents and young adult children (15-24 years)

(Unit: %, people, point)

| Category | | Strongly disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree | Strongly agree | Total (number) | Average |
|------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| Ages 15-17 | I usually talk openly with my child. | 2.5 | 3.4 | 19.5 | 40.7 | 33.9 | 100.0(118) | 4.00 |
| | I usually understand my child. | - | 2.5 | 18.6 | 48.3 | 30.5 | 100.0(118) | 4.07 |
| | I usually trust my child. | - | - | 11.0 | 48.3 | 40.7 | 100.0(118) | 4.30 |
| Ages 18-24 | I usually talk openly with my child. | 2.4 | 7.1 | 11.9 | 46.0 | 32.5 | 100.0(252) | 3.99 |
| | I usually understand my child. | 1.2 | 2.4 | 18.3 | 48.0 | 30.2 | 100.0(252) | 4.04 |
| | I usually trust my child. | - | - | 9.9 | 49.6 | 40.5 | 100.0(252) | 4.31 |

Note: The target of this analysis is 371 people who have adolescent children.

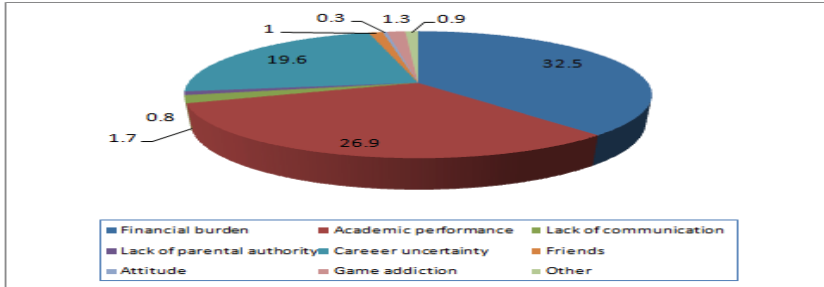
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

According to the second round of the 2010 family survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the percentage of parents who felt challenged during parenting was 85.0%, indicating that the majority of parents feel this way. Their specific challenges are childcare cost (32.5%), followed by academic performance and career choice.

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[Figure 3-3] Challenges in parenting

(Unit: %)

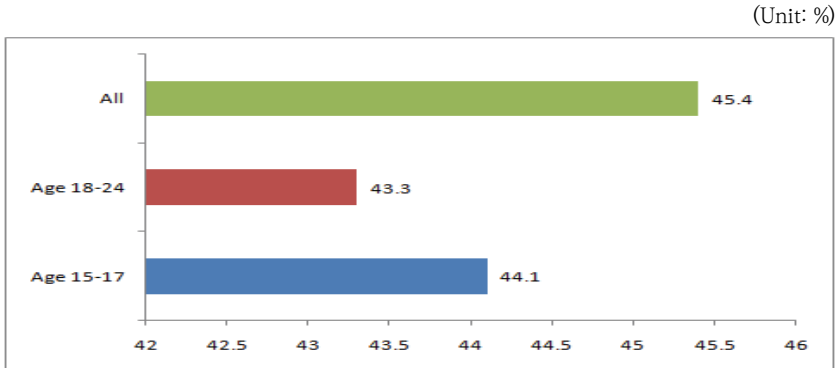


Note: The target of this analysis on challenges in parenting is 1,051 people.

Source: The second round of the family survey by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2010)

According to the 2014 telephone survey from the parental perspective, the percentage of parents who experienced conflicts with adolescent children during the past year was 45.4%, almost half of all respondents. There was no distinctive difference between the parents with adolescent children from ages 15-17 (44.1%), and the parents with young adult children from ages 18-24 (43.3%).

[Figure 3-4] Percentage of parents who experienced conflicts with children in young adulthood



Note: The target of this analysis is 371 people who have adolescent children.

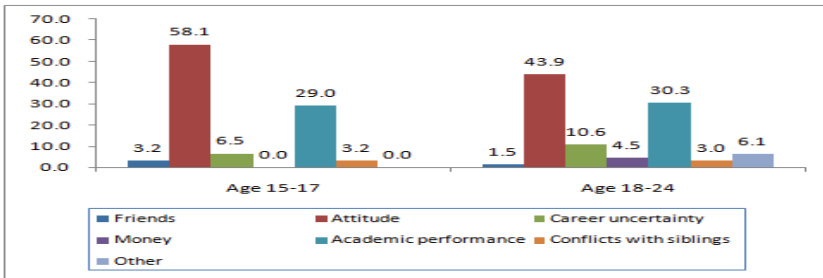
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

The causes of conflict between parents and adolescent children were as follows: lifestyle (48.7%), academic performance (22.7%), and employment/career choice (11.3%). Aside from these, money issues, friends (either of the same or opposite sex), household chores, and sibling rivalry were also mentioned. There was no distinctive difference by age group. However, parents who have children from ages 15-17 often have conflicts due to their children's friends and lifestyle; parents with children from ages 18-24 often have conflicts over employment and career choices.

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[Figure 3-5] Causes of conflicts between parents and children in young adulthood

(Unit: %)

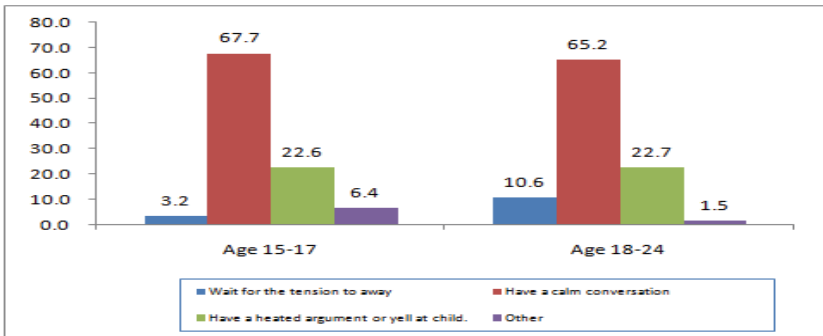


Note: The target of this analysis is 124 people who experienced conflict with children, among 371 people who have adolescent children.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

[Figure 3-6] Ways of coping with conflicts with children in young adulthood by age

(Unit: %)



Note: The target of this analysis is 124 people who experienced conflicts with adolescent children.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

Regarding ways of coping with conflicts, the majority of parents (63.7%) responded that they talk quietly. Other people coped with conflicts through “heated argument or yelling” (24.2%) and “just tolerating” (8.1%) the conflict, which was an insignificant response percentage. Aside from these, a small number of people were getting help from school, teachers, acquaintances, and professionals. Overall, conflicts between parents and adolescent children are solved via nonviolent methods, and are solved within a household without any intervention by experts. A similar tendency was found in each group of participants.

2) Relationship and Conflict Patterns between Parents and Adult Children (25 or older)

According to the 2014 telephone survey on relationships between parents and adult children (25 or older), the majority (75.0%) of the participants said they usually talk about things openly, and 88.3% of the participants said they usually understand their children; 91.6% of the participants said that they trust their children. Overall, the majority of parents were identified as having a close and trusting relationship with their adult children.

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〈Table 3-3〉 Relationship between parents and adult children (25 years of age or older)

(Unit: %, person, point)

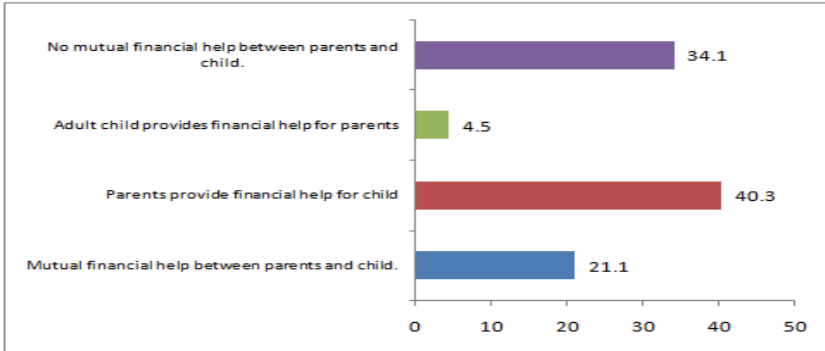
| Category | Strongly disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Slightly agree | Strongly agree | Total (number) | Average |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| I usually talk openly with my child. | 1.9 | 7.5 | 15.6 | 41.2 | 33.8 | 100.0(308) | 3.97 |
| I usually understand my child. | 1.9 | 2.6 | 7.1 | 52.6 | 35.7 | 100.0(308) | 4.18 |
| I usually trust my child. | 1.0 | 1.3 | 6.2 | 48.7 | 42.9 | 100.0(308) | 4.31 |

Note: The target of this analysis on relationships with adult children is 308 people who have adult children.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards spouse, siblings, and family conflicts」

With regard to financial exchange between parents and children in adulthood (25 or older), most parents (40.3%) helped their children financially. Of the participants, 34.1% said that neither parents nor children gave financial help, while 21.1% of participants said that parents and children exchanged financial help. Only 4.5% of the respondents said that adult children helped their parents. Overall, the rate of financial exchange between parents and adult children was 65.9%, and there were more cases of parents helping their children than the cases of children helping their parents.

[Figure 3-7] Financial exchange between parents and adult children (25 or older)
(Unit: %)



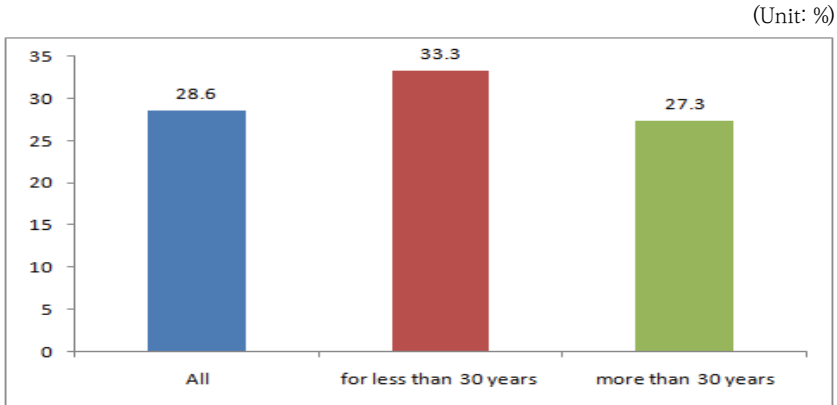
Note: The target of this analysis on financial exchange with children in adulthood is 308 people who have adult children.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

According to the 2014 telephone survey from the parental perspective, the percentage of parents who experienced conflicts with adult children during the past year was 28.6%—not even one-third of all participants with adult children. The group of parents who have been married for less than 30 years had 6.0% more conflicts than the group of parents who have been married for more than 30 years.

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[Figure 3-8] Percentage of parents who experienced conflict with adult children (25 or older)



Note: The target of this analysis on the experience of conflict with children in adulthood is 308 people who have adult children.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

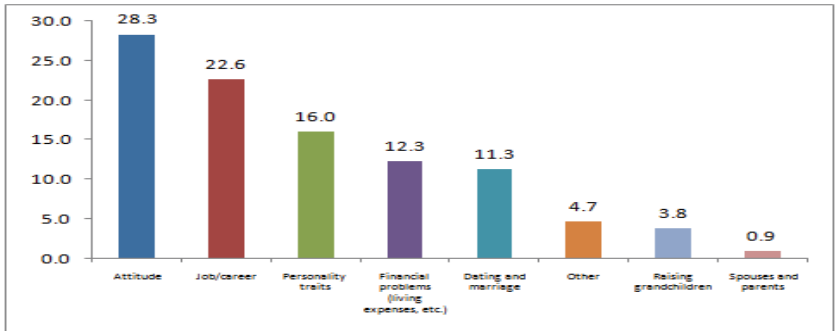
According to previous studies on causes of conflict between parents and married children, in 2007, the main causes of conflict were husband or financial status, family and relatives, lifestyle, and work/employment; in 2008, the causes were similar but the percentage was relatively higher than the previous year; in 2010, the overall causes declined.

<Table 3-4> Changes in conflict factors between parents and married children
(Unit: %)

| Category | Financial problem | Husband problem | Problems with marriage or friends of the opposite sex | Problem with family and relatives | Problem with children's education | Problem with child birth | Problem with employment | Problem with lifestyle |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------|---|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 2007 | 25.0 | 36.5 | 17.2 | 21.0 | 16.0 | 12.5 | 19.7 | 21.0 |
| 2008 | 28.1 | 35.3 | 20.0 | 25.0 | 19.2 | 13.8 | 22.6 | 25.0 |
| 2010 | 23.9 | 31.8 | 18.6 | 20.8 | 17.32 | 13.4 | 19.3 | 20.8 |

Source: The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2012) 2012 Women and Family Panel Survey.

[Figure 3-9] Causes of conflict between parents and adult children (25 or older)
(Unit: %)



Note: The target of the analysis on causes of conflict between parents and adult children is 88 people who experienced conflicts.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

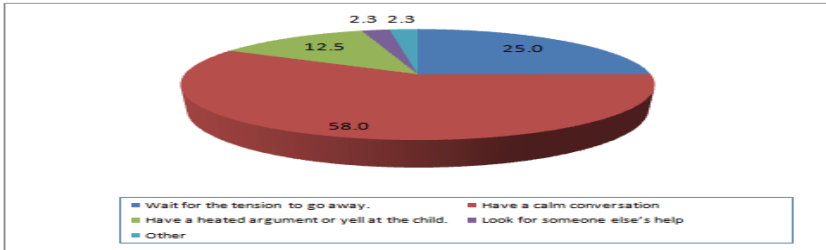
In contrast, the result of the telephone survey on the causes of conflict showed different results. The participants for the analysis of the conflict between parents and adult children were 88 people who have had such experience. The main cause of conflict was lifestyle (28.3%), followed by work and

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employment (22.6%), personality and emotional problems (16.0%), financial burdens such as living cost (12.3%), and problems with friends of the opposite sex or marriage (11.3%). Aside from these, problems with raising grandchildren, spouse problems, and elderly parent issues were mentioned as causes of conflict. Because the present survey included both married and single adult children, there is a minor difference in survey results from the previous survey on conflicts with married children. Nonetheless, there is a commonality between previous studies and the present survey: children's employment, lifestyle, and financial problems were identified as the major causes of family conflict.

When asked about ways of coping with conflicts, the majority of respondents (58.0%) said that they talk quietly with their children, while 25.0% of the participants said they just tolerate the conflict. Only 12.5% were identified as yelling or having intense arguments. A small number of people also asked for help from their acquaintances or professionals.

[Figure 3-10] Ways of coping with conflicts with adult children (25 or older)
(Unit: %)

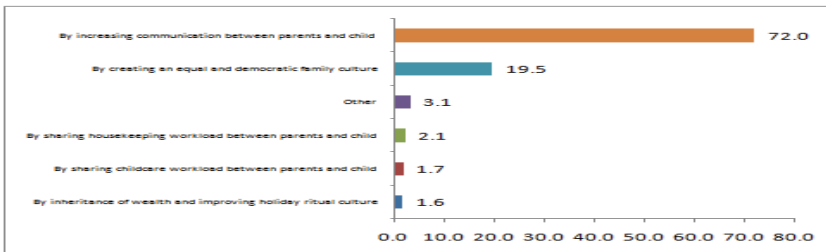


Note: The target of this analysis on ways of coping conflicts with adult children is 88 people who experienced conflicts.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

When asked what is most necessary to improve the relationship between parents and children, more than 70% of the respondents chose improving communication between parents and children. This shows that a lack of parent-child communication is a major cause of conflict and communication is the key to resolving such conflict. Other suggestions include creating an equal and democratic atmosphere and sharing household chores between parents and children.

[Figure 3-11] Desire to improve the relationship between parents and children
(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

3. Summary and Implications

Intergenerational conflicts are affected by a person's viewpoint on children and parenting. Recently, the viewpoint on children in Korea has begun to gradually change from a child-centered viewpoint to a couple/parent-centered viewpoint. The scope of parenting is extending to the time of children's marriage and employment. The conflict between parents and children showed differences based on the children's age. From the parents' perspective in the most recent year for which data is available, conflicts with adolescent children (45.4%) are more severe than conflicts with adult children (28.6%). The main causes of conflict are lifestyle, employment, and career; in addition, the conflicts with adult children were identified as being related to personality, emotion, and financial burden. To cope with conflict, most people tended to talk with their children quietly, but some parents with adolescent children often argued intensely or yelled at their children.

As for the desire to improve the relationship between parents and children, most people wished to strengthen parent-child communication and create an equal and democratic family atmosphere. There was also a desire to change the tradition of inheritance and holidays (memorial service), and to reduce the burden of family member care and childcare. This requires diverse policies to strengthen family communication, establish a reasonable family culture, and reduce the burden of family care.

The survey results showed that conflicts between parents and children differed based on the children's age. This implies that the resolution of intergenerational conflict should be approached differently, in a way that reflects these factors. In particular, to help families with adolescent children, who suffer from family conflicts more severely than families with adult children, it is necessary to establish a policy that can strengthen parent-children communication; for the families with adult children. There is a need for policies to create an equal and democratic family culture to improve the inheritance tradition and holiday culture, and to reduce the burden of family care.

4

Functional Family Conflict Patterns

1. Family–Care Conflict Patterns
2. Inheritance Conflict Patterns
3. Work–Family Conflict Patterns
4. Summary and Implications

4

Functional Family Conflict << Patterns

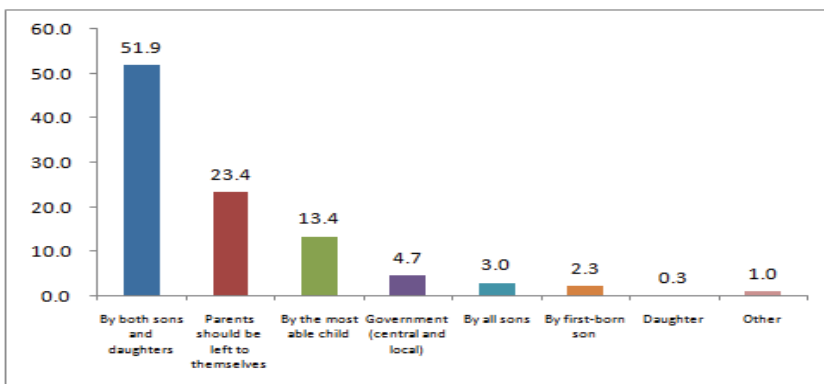
1. Family-Care Conflict Patterns

1) Family Care Environment

When asked who has the responsibility of supporting elderly parents, the majority of participants (51.9%) responded that both sons and daughters have an equal responsibility, followed by “parents should support themselves” (23.4%), and “whoever has the capability to support the elderly parents should take the responsibility” (13.4%). In addition, there were other responses such as “the central and local government should take responsibility” (4.7%), “sons” (3.0%), and “the eldest son” (2.3%).

[Figure 4-1] Viewpoint on responsibility for supporting elderly parents

(Unit: %)



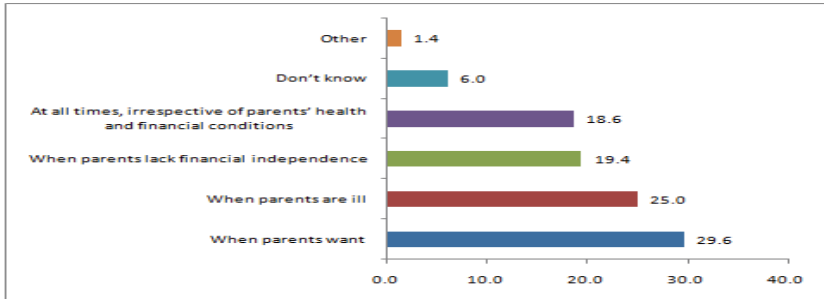
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

This shows changes in the public's perception of sons' (or the eldest son's) traditional responsibility to support elderly parents in the patriarchal system. A relatively high number of respondents said that parents should support themselves, which shows a shift in the perception regarding supporting elderly parents compared to the past. In addition, the expectation for the government to take responsibility for supporting the elderly was below 5%, whereas the expectation for family members or parents themselves to take responsibility was high; this indicates a need to examine the current family care policy.

When asked about the degree of adult children's responsibility for supporting their elderly parents, most expressed the viewpoint that "children should take care of their elderly parents when they want them to" (29.6%), followed by "when the elderly parents are not healthy" (25.0%), "when the elderly parents are financially incapable of supporting themselves" (19.4%), and "regardless of the capability of the elderly parents, children should take responsibility" (18.6%). In other words, the sense of responsibility for supporting the elderly parents was rather passive and conditional as opposed to voluntary.

[Figure 4-2] Degree of adult children's responsibility for supporting elderly parents

(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

According to the telephone survey, the percentage of adult children who live with a widowed parent was 47.2%; among them, 30.9% of the respondents were living with their parents and 16.3% of the respondents had a widowed parent living with their sibling's family. The percentage of participants who were living with their in-laws was 30.1%. Among them, 5.6% of the respondents were living with in-laws and 24.5% of the respondents said one of their siblings lives with their in-laws. Overall, the percentage of those living with their birth parents was comparatively higher than the percentage of those living with in-laws.

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〈Table 4-1〉 Percentage of those living with elderly parents/ in-laws

(Unit: %, person)

| Category | They live with me. | They live with my sibling's family. | Other | Total (number) |
|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|----------------|
| Living with birth parents | 30.9 | 16.3 | 52.7 | 100.0(753) |
| Living with in-laws | 5.6 | 24.5 | 70.0 | 100.0(486) |

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

When asked whether their elderly parents need support, 10.5% of the respondents said their birth parents needed support, while 15.2% of the respondents said their in-laws needed support.

〈Table 4-2〉 Need to support elderly parents

(Unit: %, person)

| Category | Yes | No | Total (number) |
|-------------------------------|------|------|----------------|
| Need to support birth parents | 10.5 | 89.5 | 100.0(753) |
| Need to support in-laws | 15.2 | 84.8 | 100.0(486) |

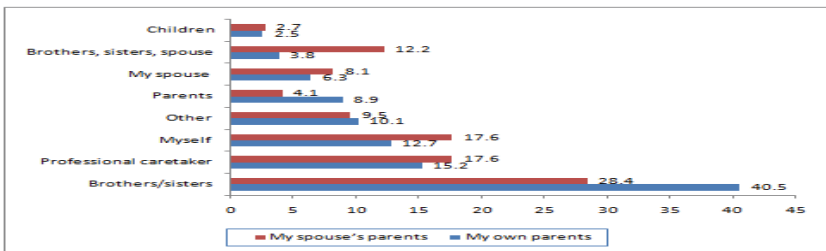
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

Respondents were asked to identify the caregiver for parents who needed support. In order, the main caregivers of birth parent(s) are the respondent's siblings, a home attendant, respondents themselves, others, their parent, spouse, or children. The main caregivers for in-laws include siblings, home attendant, respondents themselves. Note that "siblings" was the first item in this list and does not need to be mentioned twice. If you

meant “parents’ siblings,” please state that specifically here., siblings, others, spouses, parents, and children in the corresponding order.

[Figure 4-3] Main caregiver for elderly parents in need

(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」.

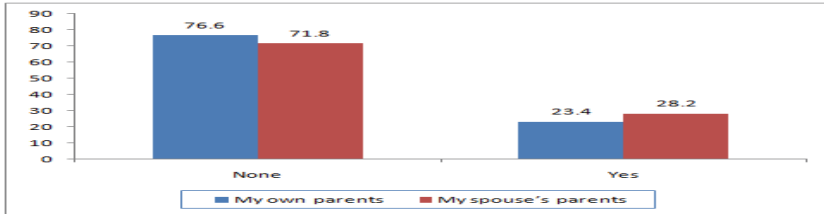
2) Family-Care Conflict Patterns

At the time of the 2014 survey, the number of people who had experienced conflicts with their elderly parents in the recent year was higher than that of people who had not. The level of conflict was 23.4% with birth parents and 28.2% with in-laws, which indicated that conflicts were experienced differently based on the relationship with elderly parents.

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[Figure 4-4] Presence of conflict with elderly parents or in-laws

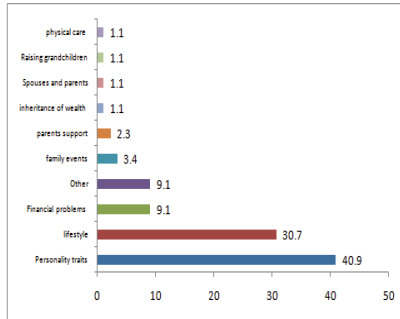
(Unit: %)



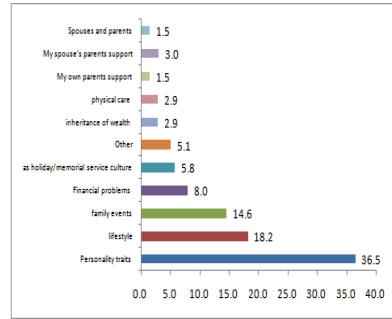
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

The results of the survey on the causes of conflict between parents and children are as follows. The main reason that adult children have conflicts with their birth parents or in-laws was identified as related to personality, ways of thinking, and lifestyle. In these categories, the percentage of conflicts with birth parents was 71.6%, while the percentage of conflicts with in-laws was 54.7%. Other causes had low percentages. This indicates that understanding the differences in ways of thinking and lifestyle is the key to resolving conflicts in parent-children relationships. In addition, it is notable that issues that do not surface in the relationship with birth parents, such as holiday/memorial service culture (5.8%) and physical care (2.9%), appear in the relationship with in-laws.

[Figure 4-5] Causes of conflict with elderly parents



[Figure 4-6] Causes of conflict with elderly in-laws



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

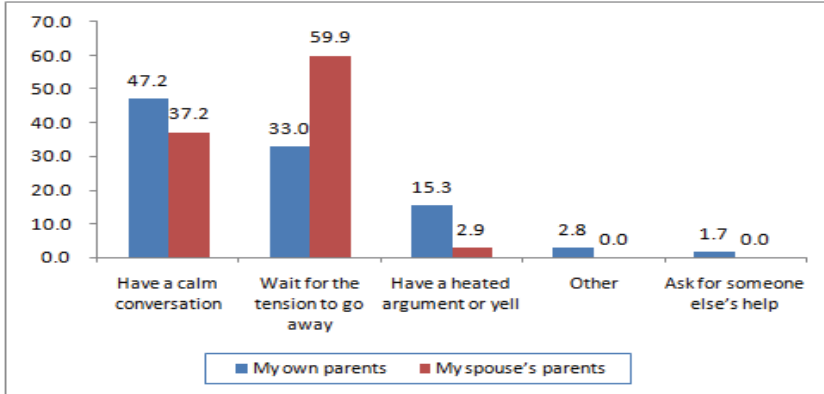
The survey also revealed ways of coping with conflicts with parents. In the relationship with birth parents, most adult children chose to have a calm conversation (47.2%), followed by “just tolerate” conflict (33.0%), and “argue intensely or yell” (15.3%). In the relationship with in-laws, the majority of participants (59.9%) said that they just tolerate the conflict, and 37.2% said they have a calm conversation.

The fact that adult children talk or yell (62.5%) during conflicts with birth parents while they quietly tolerate (60%) conflicts with in-laws instead of intense arguing or yelling shows that the coping methods used with birth parents and in-laws are clearly different.

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[Figure 4-7] Ways of coping with conflict with elderly parents

(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

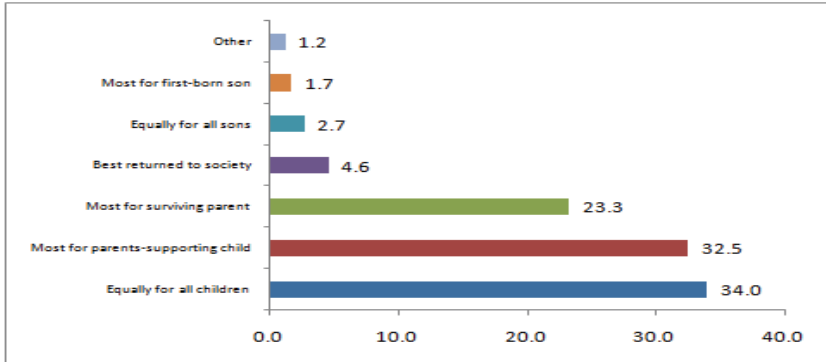
2. Inheritance Conflict Patterns

1) Viewpoint on Inheritance

According to the 2014 telephone survey asking ideal ways of sharing inheritance, most participants (34.0%) said that “all children should share equally,” followed by the view that “whoever supported the elderly parents should inherit the most” (32.5%) and “the surviving spouse should inherit the most” (23.3%). On the other hand, the following categories had low responses: “all sons should inherit equally” (2.7%), “the eldest son should inherit the most” (1.7%), and “the family should donate the inheritance to society” (4.6%).

[Figure 4-8] Best way of dividing parents' inheritance

(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

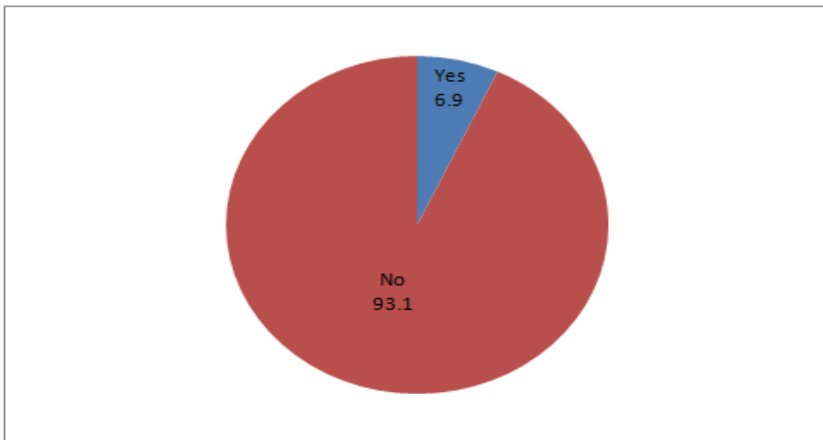
These results show a contextual similarity with the question on the responsibility for supporting elderly parents: “both daughters and sons” (51.9%) had the highest response rate, followed by “whoever has the capacity to support the elderly parents” (13.4%), while only 5.3% people said “the eldest son” or “sons” should support elderly parents (see Figure 4-1). In other words, this shows the phenomenon of reducing the responsibility of the eldest son or sons to support elderly parents, as well as demonstrating the changes in perception regarding inheritance: today, people seem to believe that most inheritance should go to all children or whoever supports the elderly parents, rather than to the eldest son or all sons. In addition, it is notable that “the family should donate the inheritance to society” had a relatively high response rate, although it is still under 5%.

2) Degree and Causes of Inheritance Conflict

According to the telephone survey, the percentage of people who experienced family conflicts over inheritance up to the time of the 2014 survey was 6.9%, which is rather low.

[Figure 4-9] Status of experiencing conflict related to inheritance issues

(Unit: %)

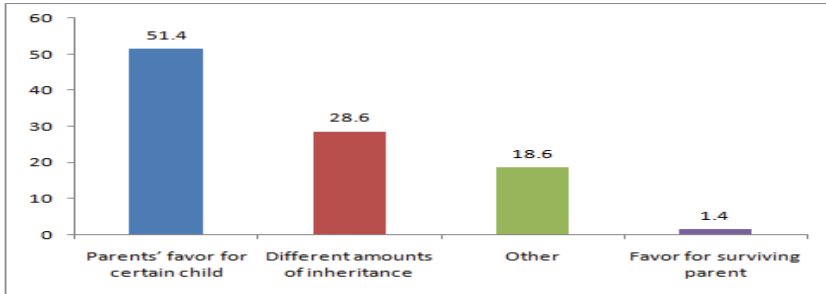


Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

Among those who experienced family conflicts over inheritance, the causes of conflict were “too much was going to a certain child” (51.4%) and “there is a discrepancy in sharing the inheritance among children” (28.6%).

[Figure 4-10] Cause of conflict in family inheritance issues

(Unit: %)



Note: The target of this analysis is 69 people who experienced family conflict over inheritance among 1,000 survey participants.

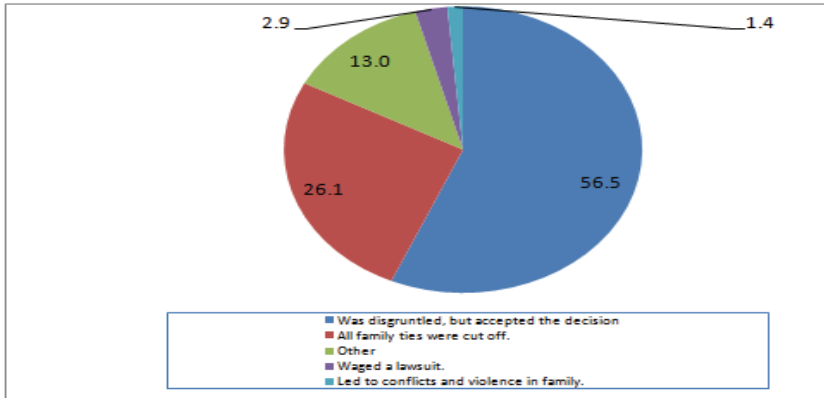
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

When asked about ways of coping with conflicts related to inheritance, the majority said that “they reluctantly and grudgingly accepted the terms” (56.5%). However, there were also people who stopped seeing their family members or severed the relationship (26.1%); there were even those who could not accept the terms and filed a lawsuit (2.9%), although this was a small number. A small number of people resorted to violence during family conflicts (1.4%). This shows that 30.4% of the family conflicts over inheritance led to more serious situations such as domestic violence, lawsuits, and the severance of relationships.

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[Figure 4-11] Ways of coping with conflicts related to family inheritance

(Unit: %)



Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards intergenerational conflicts, family care, and inheritance」

3. Work-Family Conflict Patterns

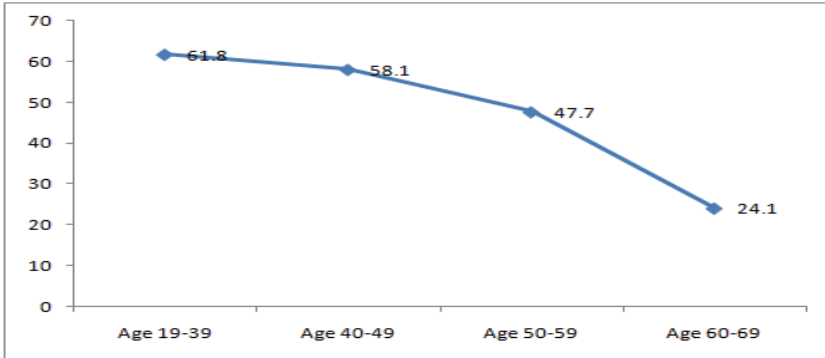
1) Work-Family Compatibility

According to the 2014 telephone survey on working couples, 49.9% of the participants were working couples and the rest (50.1%) were not working couples. In other words, almost half of those surveyed were working-couple families.

Most working couples were in their 20s and 30s (61.8%); as age went up, the percentage of working-couple families gradually reduced, reaching a level of 24.1% among people in their 60s.

[Figure 4-12] Percentage of working couples by age

(Unit: %)



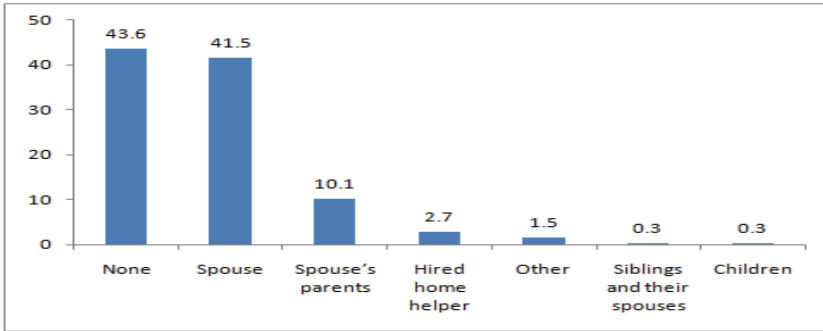
Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards spouse, siblings, work and family conflicts」

Working couples need help with household chores and child-care, but according to the survey, 43.6% of them were not getting any help. The working couples who were getting help received assistance from spouses (41.5%) or from in-laws or birth parents (10.1%). Overall, 51.6% of all working couples were getting help from their family members.

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[Figure 4-13] Main people who help working couples with household

(Unit: %)



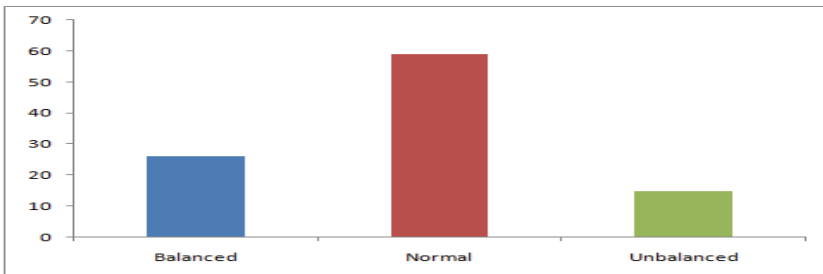
Note: The target of this analysis is 337 people from working-couple families among 676 married people.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards spouse, siblings, work and family conflicts」

In previous studies on the level of balance between work and family in working-couple families, about 59% of the participants reported their balance to be “average”; the response of “balanced” was 11.3% higher than the response of “unbalanced” (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2010).

[Figure 4-14] Level of balance between work and family in working-couple families

(Unit: %)



Note: The target of this analysis is 2,508 people and the average is 3.1 points.

Source: The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2010). The second round of family surveys.

2) Degree of Work-Family Conflict and Causes

In order to examine gender-role conflict between working couples, the present study surveyed the following categories: ① sharing household chores, ② supporting elderly parents, ③ participating in family events, ④ managing household and finances, and ⑤ childcare and education. The results are as follows.

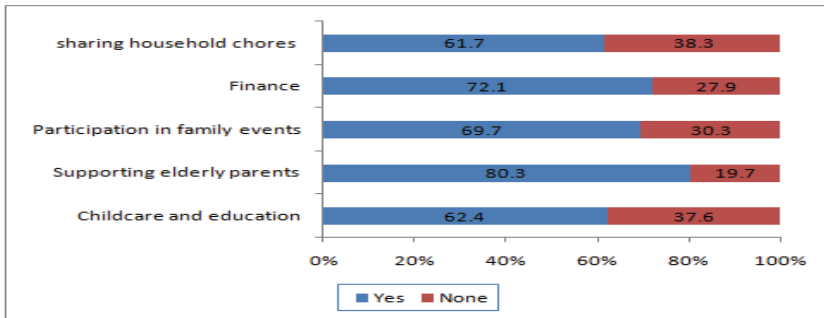
Working couples' gender-role conflict was 69.3% on average, and the percentage of each conflict category is as follows: "supporting elderly parents" (80.3%), "managing household and finances" (72.1%), "participating in family events" (69.7%), "childcare and education" (62.4%), and "sharing household chores" (61.7%).

Based on previous studies by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (2010), the causes of family conflicts in working-couple families with young children are as follows. Among all working-couple families, about 55% experienced conflicts, the main causes of which included "heavy workload" (29%), "lack of family time" (27%), "burden of childcare" (20%), and "burden on household chores" (14%) in the corresponding order.

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[Figure 4-15] Experience of conflict over gender roles in working-couple families

(Unit: %)

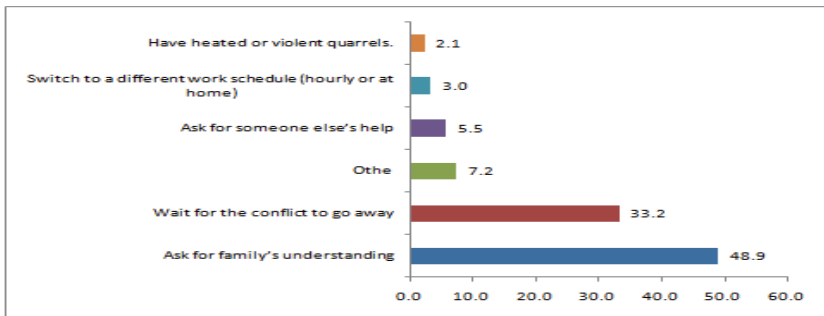


Note: The target of this analysis is 337 people from working-couple families among 676 married people.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards spouse, siblings, work and family conflicts」

[Figure 4-16] Ways of coping with conflicts on work-family balance in working-couple families

(Unit: %)



Note: The target of this analysis is 235 people who experienced conflicts over gender roles among 337 people from working-couple families.

Source: Telephone survey data on 「Reality and attitude towards spouse, siblings, work and family conflicts」

The most common ways of coping with work–family conflicts were to “ask family members for understanding” (48.9%) and to “just tolerate the conflict” (33.2%). There were also people who ask others, including professionals, for help (5.5%), or who modify their work hours (from full-time to part-time) or workplace (working from home instead of at an office) (3.0%). A small number of people resorted to violence or heated arguments to solve the conflict (2.1%).

4. Summary and Implications

In relation to parent–adult children conflicts, the viewpoint on supporting elderly parents is changing; the traditional patriarchal viewpoint that the eldest son should support elderly parents is diminishing, and many elderly parents today have the ability to support themselves, becoming increasingly less dependent on their grown-up children. This shows that adult children’s sense of responsibility for supporting elderly parents is passive and conditional, rather than voluntary.

For one year from the time of the 2014 survey, when asked about parent–children conflicts from the adult children’s perspective, the percentage of conflicts with in-laws (28.2%) was higher than that of conflicts with birth parents (23.4%). The main causes of conflicts with either side were personality, ways of thinking, and lifestyle. In addition, the causes of conflicts

with in-laws included holiday/memorial service, physical caring, etc. Methods of coping with conflicts differed based on the relationship: with birth parents, people either talk quietly or have heated arguments; with in-laws, most people just tolerate the conflict. This indicates that the degree of conflict, causes, and ways of coping with conflicts all differ based on the relationships between elderly parents and adult children.

With regard to the viewpoint on family conflicts over inheritance within the family, one third of respondents said that the ideal way of sharing inheritance was “equal distribution among all children,” followed by “whoever supported elderly parents,” and “surviving spouse.” Meanwhile, “all sons” or “the eldest son” and “the family should donate the inheritance to society” had low response rates, which shows the same type of change in the viewpoint on supporting elderly parents, moving away from traditional patriarchal views. According to the 2014 survey, the percentage of people who experienced family conflicts over inheritance was 6.9%. The main causes, accounting for about 80% of conflicts, were “a certain child inherits the most” or “there is a discrepancy in the method of sharing the inheritance.” As a way of coping with the conflict, over half reported “reluctantly and grudgingly accepting the terms,” and one third of the cases led to more serious consequences such as taking the family conflict to court or severing family relationships. This implies a social need to exert policy efforts

to establish an ideal culture of sharing inheritance and memorial service responsibility.

Regarding work-family conflicts, the gender role conflict among working couples was 69.3% on average. Among these conflicts, supporting elderly parents, managing the household and finances, participating in family events, childcare and education, and sharing household chores were fairly highly represented (62-80%). The causes of conflict were heavy workload, lack of family time, the burden of childcare, and the burden of household chores, in the corresponding order. To cope with such conflict, most people either asked family members for understanding or just tolerated the conflict. As such, even though the degree of conflict is high, two fifths of working-couple families had no help with their household chores or childcare. This implies a need for systematic policy decisions to help maintain the work-family balance.

5

Conclusion and Policy Implications

1. Conclusion
2. Policy Implications

5

Conclusion and Policy Implications <<

1. Conclusion

As Korean society has undergone rapid industrialization and transitions to a post-industrialized society, family structure and function are changing at a fast pace due to complex factors such as individualism, increase in elderly population, late marriage, increase in divorce rate, and low birth rate, etc. Due to weakened family values and family functions from shrinking family sizes and simplified generations, conflicts are expected to increase among family members. In particular, due to the increase in working couples and the weakening of family values, the absence of family functions such as support and care for family members is becoming more evident. In addition, family conflicts between spouses and generations are expected to worsen due to prevalent individualism and confusion in gender roles, and lack of communication between generations.

In order to improve and ensure the quality and health of family life in response to complex and diversifying family conflicts, it is necessary to seek multilateral policy solutions. First of all, it is imperative to remove the causes of family conflicts and strengthen family ties. It is also crucial to take a policy ap-

proach to diagnose the weaknesses of family function and to minimize its causes and negative effects.

2. Policy Implications

In traditional Korean thinking, family conflicts are considered private and personal issues that need to be resolved within the family. However, when family conflicts lead to broken families and create social costs, this becomes a public problem that requires political and social intervention. Therefore, maintaining and developing a strong family in response to family conflicts has a number of policy implications, as presented below.

The results of this study revealed that relatively many family conflicts stem from family relationships, including intergenerational conflicts. These conflicts are believed to arise from a failure to understand each other's different values and from a lack of communication. This means that it is necessary to create a family-friendly environment from the social standpoint while strengthening communication skills and increasing family time from the family's perspective in order to make improvements in the overall situation. In addition, undemocratic gender relationships are also mentioned as a crucial cause of family conflict. Many of the conflicts in supporting elderly parents and sharing inheritance are speculated to be based on unequal gender relationships or disagreements on gender roles.

Although there has been a systematic improvement in gender equality to a certain degree, as witnessed in the recent abolishment of the patriarchal family system and the establishment of equal inheritance between daughters and sons, sociological ambivalence is present, as there is still inequality in actual gender roles within families and inheritance culture. Such sociological ambivalence is difficult to alter simply by changing the system or policy, and it appears to require improvement in general societal perception.

On the other hand, the general viewpoint on supporting family members has been family-centered, and the sense of responsibility is still passive while the reality of supporting family members is slowly losing the capacity for family-centered support due to smaller and more nuclear families, weakening family values, and increasing numbers of working-couple families. This implies that supporting elderly parents is no longer the sole responsibility of families; both families and the society need to take a part in this requirement as partners. In particular, primary caregivers have traditionally been women, with men taking a marginal role; such imbalanced gender role distribution has been the main cause of family conflicts between parents and children, between spouses, and between siblings. This implies the need to redistribute roles so that all family members can equally share the burden of caring for elderly parents (Lee et al., 2011). In addition, the resources of the elderly

and conflicts over supporting the elderly were identified to be closely related (Lee et al., 2011, second quote); therefore, it is necessary to reinforce financial resources for the elderly to relieve or reduce the elder-care-related conflicts between elderly parents and children, for which various policy efforts must be made.

In the Korean culture of inheritance, the traditional inheritance-support system is gradually disappearing. Instead, an awareness of the need to support oneself in old age is spreading widely. Along with a low birth rate and aging society in this transitional period, this is expected to worsen the conflict between elderly parents and adult children in regard to the status, time, amount, and method of receiving inheritance (Lee et al., 2011). It indicates the need to allocate inheritance under a long-term senior care plan and establish a progressive inheritance culture based on deliberate and affectionate choice (Kim et al., 2009), because inheritance conflicts often arise from the expectation of receiving inheritance and reward for caregiving.

The study findings showed that about 50% of participants were working couples. Among them, 44% of working-couple families in need of help with childcare were receiving no help. In addition, 56% of working-couple families received assistance in household chores and childcare, but the rest of the working-couple families (44%) were not receiving any assistance

even though they need help. Even among those who receive assistance, 52% receive help from their family members (spouse, in-laws, or birth parents), which shows the absence of public assistance in household chores and childcare for working-couple families. Meanwhile, more than half of working-couple families experienced conflicts related to participating in household chores or childcare and education, which indicates that the absence of public assistance is a cause of family conflicts. This also indicates the need for policies to relieve the working-couple family's burden of caregiving and to improve public assistance. Along with this, the imbalance in gender roles and hierarchical gender structure in responsibilities for household chores and caregiving was identified as affecting family conflict. Therefore, family culture should continue to improve in order to equally distribute household chores and caregiving between spouses by spreading the sense of gender equality and establishing a democratic relationship between spouses.

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