
Hegemonic Masculinity and Changing Lives of Men

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Research Objective and Contents

This study tracks the changes in the men's life and the practice of masculinities by different generations in Korea and suggests policy directions. Specifically, we deal with three aspects of hegemonic masculinity ; the organization of hierarchy among men through violence, breadwinner masculinity, and gender discrimination consciousness.

The study contents are as follows.

- Characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity and its Changes in the Context of Macro-Social Changes from the Modern Transition Period of 1900 to the Digital Age
- Violence and the Organization of Hierarchy among Men

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- Generational Differences of Breadwinner Masculinity
- Various Visions for Dating and Family Formation of Unmarried Men
- Gender Discrimination Consciousness among Men

Methodology

We used two research methodologies.

First, we relied on the life history approach. We interviewed twelve men of four generations; Industrialized Generation(Born in 1945~1960), Rapid Growth Generation(Born in 1961~1972), IMF·Neoliberalism Generation (Born in 1973~1984), and Digital Generation(Born in 1985~).

Second, we relied on the focus group interview. We employed FGI to generalize generational differences found through life history interview using more research cases. We tried to identify policy needs of men depending on their life cycle.

Main Findings

▶ Violence and the Organization of Hierarchy among Men

The violence and the military discipline by teachers and seniors in school were weakened or degraded somewhat starting with students who attended the middle or high school since the mid to late 1990s. They question the legitimacy rather than unconditionally obey and conform to the corporal punishment by teachers and seniors. On the other hand, ranking culture based on the physical power among boys continues in all generations.

▶ Generational Differences of Breadwinner Masculinity

As a result of the IMF crisis, the actual breadwinning capacity of men has been weakened. Men in the IMF·Neoliberalism Generation take it for granted that

women continue to work after marriage. However, as an unavoidable choice in the child-rearing period, the non-continuous dual-earner practice that wife is out from employment to raise children and is reemployed later in life has been established. In spite of these changes, the economic power is still at the center of male identity.

► Various Visions for Dating and Family Formation of Unmarried Men

The Digital Generation has various visions on dating and family formation in the future.

First, the most common vision found in the Digital Generation is to maintain not only the burden but also the responsibility and privilege as a breadwinner. Second, some men refuse dating and family formation because of the burden laid on men as breadwinners.

Third, some men reconstructs the gender norm in dating and family formation because of the uncertain future.

► Gender Discrimination Consciousness among Men

In all generations except the Digital Generation, there has been an overt misogyny based on the male chauvinism. Men also tend to justify discrimination against women in the workplace across all generations.

Men in the Rapid-Growth Generation tend to think that the status of women has been improved compared to the lives of their mothers and in terms of the development of ‘the preferential treatment for women’ policy.

Some men argue they are the victims of reverse discrimination against men, but more men think that men's lives are better than women in Korea. They say that they agree with the goals of feminism, but they also disfavor the way and the level of demand feminists claim. In other words, they insist women should

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claim rights to the extent that they do not threaten the privileges and the authority of men in the manner that men allow.

Policy Suggestions

▶ The Development and Support of Alternative Masculinities Practice Programs

- Alternative Masculinities Education for Boys
- Gender Equal Practice Program by Men's Life Cycle

▶ The Protection of Soldier's Human Rights and Reform of Military Culture

- Establishment of Independent Agency for Soldier's Human Rights
- Institutionalization of Rational Military Culture

▶ Creating Gender Equal Digital Environment

- Gender-Sensitive Digital Literacy Education
- Support for Creation and Distribution of Gender Equal Cultural Contents