

# **Analysis of Relation between Gender Role Attitudes and Women's Economic Activities**

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## **Abstract**

The social mood regarding men and women can be largely defined by two gender role attitudes: one is traditional and conservative and the other is modern and equal. Traditional and conservative gender role attitude is one that believes men should be the family's provider, should enter the labor market and work for pay, while women should serve as full-time housewives or perform caregiving roles. In contrast, modern and equal gender role attitude says there is no role differentiation by gender, that men can also perform caregiving or domestic roles and women can also engage in economic activities as the provider.

This study systematically reviews the effects of gender role attitude not only at the individual level but also at the country level. It also performs various analyses to assess its effect on women's economic activities as seen through women's role in house work and labor market participation.

Chapter 2 reviews gender role attitudes, theoretic background and prior studies. It then sums up how they are related to this study.

Chapter 3 assesses how gender role attitude between married couples affect their division of house work. It was found that between the couple, the man's attitude was critical in determining the house work time and share. This result implies that men in Korea are still mired in the traditional gender role attitude, and detaching themselves from such conventions can become the driver of more equal house work between a husband and a wife.

Chapter 4 takes a look into how women, before and after childbirth, experience change in their path of economic participation and typifies the different paths. It also reviews how the changing path of gender role attitude is formed between the married couple in the same period. It was deduced that when it comes to economic activities after experiencing childbirth, the most important factor is the woman's gender role attitude, more so than the combination of the couple's attitudes. Specifically, when the woman's attitude is modern and equal, it was likelier for her to stay in the labor market throughout the process of childbirth or return to it afterwards. But if her attitude becomes more traditional, it was likelier to lead to career discontinuation. The finding leads to the implication that when it comes to policy, it should not only focus on childcare support.

It should also induce gradual change in gender role attitude in women and the society in general.

Chapter 5 analyzes the impact of societal and individual gender role attitude on women's labor market performance. It confirms that not only individual attitude but the society's norm also has an impact. It also found that individuals' attitude of equality can weaken the impact of the societal norm. To take a detailed look into individual women's changing behavior in the labor market, the study attempted to measure the societal gender role attitude (that acts as a social norm) at the individual level. "The probability of the wife earning more than the husband" was used as a proxy variable, and it was assessed whether individual gender role attitude had a correction effect in labor market performance. This analysis confirmed that the societal gender role attitude was affecting individuals' choice in labor market participation as well as their real wage. It was also found that when it comes to women's choice in labor market participation, not only the societal attitude or the norm, but also the degree of equality in individuals' attitude had a positive (+) correlation. In addition, the structural equation model was used to assess how a woman's attitude before and after childbirth affected her economic participation, and it was once again found that the more equal her attitude after childbirth, the likelier it was that she stays in the labor market.

Chapter 6 assesses how gender role attitude and work-family balance policy affect women's economic participation through an international comparative study. First, it was found that increase in reliable childcare service, especially public service, was the most critical factor in increasing women's economic participation. There should be satisfactory childcare infrastructure for workers to safely entrust their children with, when they decide to return to work after childbirth or parental leave. There should be an effective combination of childcare service and cash allowance. Next, gender equality awareness must be improved. When there are less family conflicts or caregiving concerns due to working mothers, and when the gender role attitude weakens, it removes the psychological barrier against women's economic participation. Given that married women who are economically active are often not free from the dual burden of work and family, ensuring an emotional support system in the family can be the prerequisite for sustaining their career, perhaps even more important than eliminating gender-discriminatory cultural practices in the labor market. This calls for a change in gender role attitude, to see women as "working individuals" not only as "wife or mother" Last, the fact that no impact was found from the leave system should not be interpreted as the leave system having no impact at all. As was explained earlier, more important than having a leave system is using the leave system, while in many countries that was not being done. Not only do men find it difficult, but also women, especially in SMEs, find it difficult to go on a leave. Thus when designing the leave system, there

should be more discussion on how to improve utilization.