

What Makes Husband and Wife Satisfied with their Marriages : A Comparative Analysis of Korea and Japan*

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This study aims to analyze marital satisfaction over the family life course and to find its determinants in Korea and Japan. The data for this study came from nationwide representative sample surveys on family in these two countries including 5,308 Korean and 4,920 Japanese men and women living with their spouses. In order to see the cultural difference and similarity in marital relations, the effects of education, income, employment, marriage gradients (normative patterns between the spouses), family stress, and quality of conjugal interactions on Korean and Japanese couples' marital satisfaction were examined. It was found that the marital satisfaction showed a U-shape pattern for both Korean and Japanese couples. In both countries husbands tend to have higher marital satisfaction than wives over the entire life course. The most important determinants of Korean and Japanese couples' marital satisfaction are good qualities of conjugal interactions including deep trust and concerns for spouse and sex life satisfaction. For Korean couples good conjugal interactions is better predictor of marital satisfaction than sex life, while for Japanese couples sex life is more important determinant of marital satisfaction.

Keywords: Marital satisfaction, Family stress, Marriage gradients, Quality of conjugal interactions, Family life cycle

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I. INTRODUCTION

Marital satisfaction has been one of the key concepts that family scholars have intensively examined for several decades. In the time of high divorce rates, it seems natural that family scholars give a special attention to the general trend of marital satisfaction during family life cycle stages and its determinants. Even though it is not clear if a low marital satisfaction is directly related to marital dissolution, it is a significant indicator of marital stability (Glenn 1990). Though a number of studies on marital satisfaction have been published, there has been little research from a cross-national perspective. The main purpose of this study is to examine marital satisfaction in Korea and Japan.

Most studies of marital satisfaction have focused on two issues: how marital satisfaction changes across family life-cycle stages (life course) and what factors determine the level of marital satisfaction. This study shares these concerns with previous studies from cross-cultural perspectives. It attempts to analyze the general trend of marital satisfaction over the duration of marriage and its determinants among husbands and wives in Korea and Japan, using nationwide representative family survey data of these two countries.

Korea and Japan have experienced similar socio-demographic changes such as low fertility rates, rapid growth of older populations, delay of marriage, high divorce rates, and growing demands for female labor force participation, which have great influences upon family life. At the same time, Korea and Japan are still under strong influences of Confucianism. Therefore, patriarchal ideology and filial obligation have significant impacts on intergenerational and conjugal relationships. In contemporary Japan, there is a distinctive gender role segregation in family life as well as in work life. Husbands serve as economic providers and wives as homemakers, although there is an emerging trend for conjugal role sharing led by those who are younger, better educated, and with urban backgrounds (Naoi and Schooler 1990; Ishii-Kuntz and Maryanski 2003). Korea's conjugal role expectation is not much different. Women are expected to become full-time housewives/mothers responsible for

household work rather than jobs outside family (Chang et al. 2005). Currently, Korean and Japanese governments are both making efforts to increase men's involvements with their families for the sake of gender equality.

This paper attempts to examine the changes of marital satisfaction across family developmental stages, focusing on gender and cross-cultural differences. The following questions will be addressed: what is the general trend of marital satisfaction over the family life course? Is it decreasing drastically right after the honeymoon period and then staying at the same level (like L-shape), or does it go down for a while, but later on go up to result in a U-shape curve, which has been found among American couples (Anderson et al. 1983)? Is there a gender difference in the level of marital satisfaction during the course of marriage? Is there a cross-cultural difference in its pattern? This study also tries to identify the determinants of marital satisfaction, which seem important in illuminating cultural similarities and differences in conjugal relationships between Korean and Japanese couples. Specifically, this study will examine the effects of marriage gradients in education, income, and employment, family stress, and quality of conjugal interactions along with other demographic variables on marital satisfaction for Korean and Japanese couples, keeping an eye on gender differences and cross-national differences in its determinants.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Patterns of Marital Satisfaction

The family developmental perspective has questioned how the conjugal relationship changes as the couple goes through family life course such as periods of honeymoon, childbirth (transition to parenthood), childrearing, with teenagers, empty nest, and becoming grandparents. Many researchers were concerned about the patterns of marital satisfaction: whether it is a U-shape or a L-shape. There seems to be a consensus on the U-shape pattern of marital satisfaction over family life course in the United States. Couples

experience high levels of marital satisfaction in the first few years of marriage, a decrease in marital satisfaction when children are born and raised, and an increase in later years of marriage when children leave home (e.g., Anderson et al. 1983; Glenn 1995; Henry et al. 2007; Orbuch et al. 1996; Rollins and Cannon 1974; Schumm and Bugaighis 1986). Henry and colleagues' recent study also showed that older couples tend to report higher marital satisfaction and perceive their spouse's behavior as less negative and more positive than middle-aged couples (Henry et al. 2007). In Korea, couples before parenthood tend to show higher levels of marital satisfaction than couples in the stages of childbirth to child's marriage (Kim and Chae 2006). According to The Social Survey, younger Korean couples also tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction than older ones (Korea National Statistical Office 2008).

In the meantime, the pattern of marital satisfaction over family life course depends on gender. It is generally known, in the United States, that husbands' marital satisfaction tends to be higher than their wives' except in the honeymoon period (Kamo 2000). Lawrence, Nysten, and Cobb (2007) suggested that marital satisfaction remained stable for husbands and declined for wives over the early pre-parental phase of marriage but showed a sharp decline for husbands and wives after the postpartum period. In the case of Korean couples, there is not a distinctive difference in marital satisfaction between husbands and wives during the period of honeymoon and rearing preschool children, but afterward, the wife's satisfaction drops sharply and never recover at the same level as that of the husband's (Chung 1997).

Findings of the U-shape pattern of marital satisfaction, however, have been criticized by many researchers. Since the pattern is always found in cross-sectional analyses, we do not know if the pattern resulted from changes in each person's marital satisfaction or cohort changes in marital satisfaction. In fact, when panel data were analyzed to focus on changes in marital satisfaction in individual respondents, researchers generally failed to find any U-shaped relationships (Vaillant and Vaillant 1993; VanLaningham et al. 2001). In case of the United States, those who married during the post-war baby boom (1946-1964) may have been more satisfied with marriage and it

might have shown up as an increase among older people in surveys in 1970 through 1990. We do not have any evidence in Korea that marital satisfaction has recently declined. According to the Social Statistics Surveys, the proportions of Korean wives being satisfied with marriage were 55.7% in 1998, 55.5% in 2002, and 60.7% in 2008, whereas for Korean men, they were 61.8% in 1998, 65.9% in 2002, and 70.6% in 2008 (Korea National Statistical Office, each year). In other words, if we find marital satisfaction of those who married longer, it is not likely to be a result of historical decrease in marital satisfaction for all married people, at least not in Korea.

Another explanation why this non-linear relationship may not indicate changes in each individual is marital attrition: those who remain married for a long time tend to be more satisfied with their marriage, and this fact may be seen as an “increase” in marital satisfaction in older married people. While couples right after marriages include all married couples, couples with long marital duration are selected few who “survived” marriage. Thus, we are comparing apples (those in early marriages) and oranges (those in late marriages) by analyzing cross-sectional data. Though divorce rates in Korea and Japan have increased, they are not at the level of that in the United States. Thus, the attrition effect by divorce is not as large as that in the United States. Given reasons discussed above, if we find any U-shaped pattern of marital satisfaction in Korea and/or Japan, it is reasonably safe to assume that it is a result of changes in marital satisfaction through family developmental stages.

2. Determinants of Marital Satisfaction

The factors found to determine the level of marital satisfaction can be categorized into the following four groups: each spouse’s psychological characteristics, socio-demographic characteristics, family-related structural variables, and the couple’s interaction characteristics. Below, these four factors are reviewed.

Individual’s psychological characteristics include self-esteem, locus of control, attribution and perceptual orientation, and gender/family related value

orientations (Lee and Hahn 2001). People with high self-esteem were reported to be more satisfied with their marriage (Park and Ko 2005). Wives who understand their husbands' personality better and husbands who believe that their personality is similar to their wives' tend to show higher levels of marital satisfaction (Kim and Ko 2007). When a couple shared the image of ideal marriage, they tended to be more satisfied with their marriages (Ko and Jeon 2003). While gender role attitudes generally do not have strong effects on marital satisfaction (Scanzoni and Greek 1990), a certain combination of husband's and wife's gender role attitudes (husband traditional and wife egalitarian) has been found to have a negative impact on marital satisfaction among American and Korean couples (Bowen and Orthner 1983; Choi 1984).

Individual's socio-demographic characteristics include educational attainment, job, income, and social class. Korean people with better education and higher family income are more likely to have higher levels of marital satisfaction (Chung 1997; Park and Ko 2005). The effect of family income was also found among Japanese husbands and wives (Kamo 1993) and among Japanese wives without much earning power themselves (Yamato 2008). In Korea, the effects of wife's employment on marital satisfaction differ depending on reasons of having paid work, job satisfaction, work-family role strains, husband's support, gender role attitude, etc. (Lee 2002). In general, it seems that egalitarian attitudes regarding the division of household work and decision making power in housework have a positive association with marital satisfaction of working men and women in Korea (Lee 2002). In addition, working wives are more satisfied with their marriages when they feel their husbands support their work and share more housework (Park 1983; Park 1987).

Family-related structural variables include family life cycle stages, premarital cohabitation, family structure (e.g., nuclear versus extended family), presence and number of children, and first marriage vs. remarriage. First, the experience of premarital cohabitation is found negatively associated with marital satisfaction in the United States (Glenn 1995). The average marital quality is slightly better in first marriages than in remarriages after divorce. The presence of stepchildren seems to exert a negative influence on

remarriages (Glenn 1995).

The couple's interaction characteristics are probably the most critical variables in determining marital satisfaction. They include family value congruence between the spouses, each spouse's role expectation and performance, communication styles, conflict-coping methods, affection and attachment pattern, and sexual life and sexual communication (Cheon 2006). Korean people with secure attachment styles tend to have higher marital satisfaction, also. It is believed that the couple's interaction characteristics such as communication and care-giving/emotional experience serve as mediators between attachment and marital satisfaction (Kim and Min 2007). High levels of anxious or avoidant dimensions of adult attachments are negatively associated with marital satisfaction, but this association is mediated by low skills of taking the role of the spouse and of solving marital conflicts (Han and Hyun 2006; Long and Andrews 1990).

The effects of sexual satisfaction and sexual communication on marital happiness differ by age (Cheon 2006). While the sexual satisfaction is more important for young couples, the sexual communication (talking to and understanding each other about sexual matters) seems more important for older people to keep their marriage happy. Hyun (2005) showed a strong, negative association between couple's conflicts over love and affection and marital satisfaction. In addition, Korean men's marital satisfaction suffers more from couple conflicts related to money management and role expectation, whereas women's marital satisfaction was influenced by couple conflicts in sex life and treatment of their own family of origin. Park and Ko (2005) found that husbands' and wives' self-esteem affected not only their own but also their spouses' marital satisfaction. Likewise, conjugal communication patterns such as constructive communication, criticism, and escaping communication affected not only their own but also their spouses' marital satisfaction. Finally, husbands' and/or wives' conflict-coping behaviors such as ignoring conflicts negatively affect both their own and their spouses' marital satisfaction. Park and Ko (2005) also reported that Korean husbands who consider their couple's conflict-coping methods reasonable tend to have the highest marital satisfaction, whereas husbands who perceive their own and

their wives' conflict-coping methods aggressive tend to have the lowest marital satisfaction. Similarly, wives who regard their couples' conflict coping method aggressive and/or avoidant tend to have low marital satisfaction (Lee and Jeon 2005).

Conjugal interactions are important for marital satisfaction among Japanese people also. Kamo (1993) reported that the frequency of having dinner together and the how many friends they share with each other affected both husband's and wife's marital satisfaction. Among Japanese husbands only, the amount of housework they perform is negatively related to their marital satisfaction. Finally, among Japanese wives only, their subjective evaluation of benefit received from their husbands in performing housework is positively related to their marital satisfaction (Kamo 1993).

As for the marital satisfaction of Japanese women with children, Yamato (2008) showed that their husband's emotional support had the largest effect. When these women's income contribution was small (less than 30% of the household income), their satisfaction was affected by the frequency of their husbands' playing with children. When their income contribution was larger than 30%, their satisfaction was affected by the amount of housework performed by their husbands.

3. Analytical Framework of the Study

In the first part of our analyses, distributions of satisfaction with marital relations are compared between Korea and Japan. Since gender is expected to make fundamental, qualitative differences in satisfaction with marital relations in these two countries, we will analyze married men and women separately. Prior to conducting regression analyses, we will take a close look at the relationship between marital duration and marital satisfaction. While this is an interesting phenomenon, it has been rarely examined for marriages outside the United States.

Given the nature of comparative analysis of marital satisfaction between Korea and Japan, the predictors in the regression analyses will be selected for its significance in illuminating cultural differences and similarities of both

countries. To examine the effect of patriarchal tradition on conjugal relationships, the marriage gradients in education, income, and employment status will be examined as independent variables of marital satisfaction. The marriage gradient refers to the tendency men marry women slightly below them in age, education, occupation, income, and so on. The more patriarchal a society is, the stronger is the tendency of marriage gradient. It is one way of keeping women devalued in a patriarchal society.

According to the traditional gender role, men should earn the family living and women should take care of the home. When men cannot take the responsibility of a family earner and rely on his wife or other family members, he may feel inadequate for not fulfilling his duty and insecure about keeping his status as the head of the family. Therefore, if wife's level of education, income, or occupational status is higher than her husband's in a patriarchal society, the husband may feel strained due to his inability to keep a higher status in his marriage and the wife also may feel stressed to keep her husband's authority intact. As a result, the couples who are not in line with marriage gradients regarding education, income, and employment status may experience low marital satisfaction. Comparing Korea and Japan in the effects of marriage gradients on marital satisfaction, this study will show which country has a stronger legacy of patriarchal Confucianism.

It is well known that family life is relatively stressful in Korea and Japan, particularly for married women. According to Korea National Statistical Office, 58% of married women in Korea said that they feel stress due to family life, whereas 41% of married men do so (Korea National Statistical Office 2008). While more married women are in labor force than before, such social support as day-care facilities and maternal leave policies have not been well developed yet. As a result, the average ages at first marriage have been relatively high and fertility rates have been extremely low in both countries (Statistical Research Institute 2008). To predict marital satisfaction in these two countries, therefore, each spouse's stress level in family life needs to be examined. We thus include variables related to that aspect in the second block as key psychological variables.

Finally, we include a couple of variables pertaining to conjugal interactions:

the quality of dyadic interaction and satisfaction with sex life in marriage in the last block of the regression analysis. Taken together, this study will examine the effects of many relevant variables on Korean and Japanese couples' marital satisfaction.

III. METHOD

1. Data

The data for this study are from the two nationwide representative sample surveys on family: the 2003 Korean National Family Survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, Korea, and the 2003 2nd National Survey of Families in Japan conducted by the Japan Society of Family Sociology. The Korean data included 3,500 household representatives, their spouses (2,711), and other family members (2,898) who are older than ten. The respondents were selected by a multi-stage area sampling process and were interviewed with a structured questionnaire during the period of September-November, 2003. This study used only the subsamples of 3,500 household representatives and their spouses. Even though in the Korean data the husbands and wives were collected as a pair, this study treated them as unrelated individuals. Two spouses from a marriage are not included in the same regression equation. The respondents for this study were limited by their ages from 28 to 77 years. The Japanese data were collected in January 2004 by a multistage random sampling process. The sample includes 6,302 men and women who answered a self-administrated questionnaire and who were born in 1926-1975. We excluded the respondents who were living apart with their spouses due to marital problems, resulting in 5,308 Korean respondents and 4,920 Japanese respondents.

2. Measures

1) Dependent Variable

Marital satisfaction: It is measured by the respondent's satisfaction with

his/her spouse in dyadic relationship as a whole. Korean respondents answered their marital satisfaction with a 5-point scale, whereas Japanese ones with a 4-point scale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of marital satisfaction.

2) Independent Variables

Marriage gradient in education: It is assessed in terms of the educational attainment gap between husband and wife. If the wife's level of education is higher than her husband's, it is coded as 1 and otherwise 0. This variable thus measures the deviation from the marriage gradient (hypergamy) in terms of education.

Marriage gradients in employment and in income: In order to capture the effects of non-normative gender roles in work arrangement on marital relationship, the husband's and wife's current employment status combination and income gap are examined. The former variable has four categories: ① working husband and working wife, ② working husband and non-working wife, ③ non-working husband and working wife, and ④ non-working husband and non-working wife. The couples with the traditional division of gender (husband being the sole family earner and wife being a full-time homemaker) serve as the reference group for the three dummy variables. The latter variable is dummy-coded to show whether the wife's income is higher than husband's (1) or not (0). Again, these variables measure the deviation from the normative pattern in marriage gradient regarding employment status and/or income.

Family stress. Korean respondents were asked to what extent they experience stress due to economic hardship in their household, child-related worries, parents-related worries, housework overload (feeling of too much responsibilities), and work-family balance matters in the past year with a 4-point scale. For Japanese respondents, the questions were asked in a similar way, except that the time frame was the past month. The work-family balance stress measure for the Japanese data was created by taking the average value of the two questions: the feeling of having no time left for job

due to the family obligations and the feeling of having no time left for family because of the job responsibilities. Likewise, in the Korean data, the stress due to parents-related worries was created by taking the average of the two responses, one about the respondent's own parents and the other about his/her parents-in-law, while the Japanese questionnaire had one question combining parents and parents-in-law. Those without parents, children, or jobs were given the lowest value (no stress).

Quality of conjugal interactions. Korean respondents were asked four items on a 5-point scale regarding degrees to which: they and their spouse show great concerns to each other, they deeply trust each other, they keep a good companionship with their spouse, and their spouse highly appreciate their ability and efforts. Similarly, Japanese respondents were asked three questions on a 4-point scale: the spouse's listening to their concerns and worries, appreciating their ability and efforts, and offering helpful words and advice. Mean scores were calculated with higher scores reflecting better marital interactions. The coefficient alphas are .87 for Korean respondents and .88 for Japanese. The sex life satisfaction also was asked as an indicator to measure the conjugal interactions on a 5-point scale for the Korean respondents and 4-point scale for Japanese.

3) Control Variables

The respondent's level of education, duration of marriage, household income, and whether they are in the first marriage or remarriage are used as control variables for this analysis. Since we expected that the relationship between marital duration and marital satisfaction were non-linear (U-shaped), we included a squared value of the marital duration.

IV. RESULTS

1. Characteristics of Respondents

〈Table 1〉 represents socio-demographic characteristics of Korean and Japanese respondents. Both samples are almost equally split between

husbands and wives. The Japanese respondents are on average much older than the Korean respondents, by 6.5 years for wives and 7 years for husbands. While the 30-40 years old consist of 66% among the Korean respondents, they do 41% among the Japanese respondents. These differences reflect the fact that the median age of the entire population of Japan is 7 years older than the Korean (Central Intelligence Agency 2009). Japanese respondents had higher education than Korean respondents on the average: the proportions of junior high school graduates (or less education) are 16% for Japanese respondents and 23% for Korean respondents.

Since the Japanese respondents are older than Korean respondents, it is expected that Japanese respondents have longer durations of marriage than do Koreans. As seen in <Table 2>, on average, Japanese respondents have been married for 25 years, whereas Koreans for about 18 years. Among Korean respondents, 99% reported the current marriage as their first marriage, whereas among Japanese 95% did the same.

<Table 1> Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables		Korea		Japan	
		n	%	n	%
Sex	Male	2,680	50.5	2,374	48.3
	Female	2,628	49.5	2,546	51.7
	Total	5,308	100.0	4,920	100.0
Age	28~29	203	3.8	115	2.3
	30~39	1,700	32.0	958	19.5
	40~49	1,770	33.8	1,046	21.3
	50~59	893	16.8	1,247	25.3
	60~77	742	14.0	1,554	31.6
	Total	5,308	100.0	4,920	100.0
	Mean	Male: 46.27		Male: 53.33	
	Female: 43.80		Female: 50.35		
Level of education	Junior high school (or less)	1,216	23.0	784	16.1
	High school & vocational school	2,455	46.4	2,571	52.7
	Jr. college or more	1,620	30.6	1,528	31.3
	Total	5,291	100.0	4,883	100.0

<Table 2> Marriage related characteristics of respondents

Variables		Korea		Japan	
		n	%	n	%
Duration of marriage	0~5 years	766	14.4	432	8.9
	6~10 years	803	15.1	508	10.4
	11~15 years	1,010	19.0	525	10.8
	16~20 years	772	14.5	468	9.6
	21~25 years	602	11.3	484	9.9
	26~30 years	442	8.3	590	12.1
	31~35 years	319	6.0	552	11.3
	36~40 years	241	4.5	593	12.2
	41~45 years	223	4.2	403	8.3
	46~50 years	84	1.6	220	4.5
	51+ years	46	0.9	95	2.0
	Total	5,308	100.0	4,870	100.0
Mean		18.34		25.05	
Remarriage	Yes	47	.9	228	4.7
	No	5,261	99.1	4,661	95.3
	Total	5,308	100.0	4,889	100.0

2. Marital Satisfaction over Family Life Course

<Table 3> shows the overall distribution of marital satisfaction in Korea and Japan. In both Korea and Japan, husbands are more satisfied with their marital relationships than wives. Among Japanese husbands, 30.5% reported "very satisfied," but only 19.2% of Japanese wives did the same. Similarly 18.5% of Korean husbands responded very satisfied with their marital relationships, whereas 12.6% of Korean wives did so. Likewise, in both countries, wives were more likely to respond somewhat or very dissatisfied than their husbands. When we converted these responses to an interval scale, the difference between the husband's and wife's mean values was statistically significant in Korea as well as in Japan. While we cannot directly compare the level of marital satisfaction between Korea and Japan due to different scales of measurement, we can still make inferences. Compared to their Korean counterparts, Japanese husbands seem to be more satisfied with their

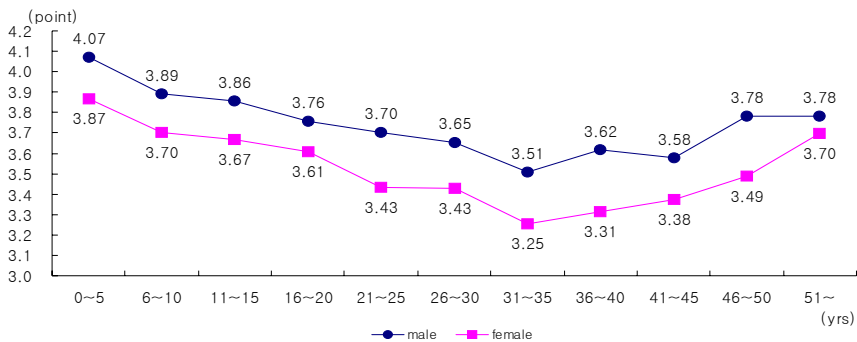
relationship with the spouses. Their proportion of “very satisfied” (30.5%) is much higher than that for Korean husbands (18.5%). The total proportion of “dissatisfied”(8.6%+1.3%=9.9%) is smaller than that for Korean husbands when those who responded “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” are equally redistributed to “somewhat satisfied” and “somewhat dissatisfied.” Among wives, however, there is no clear pattern between Korean and Japanese. Japanese wives were not only more likely to respond “very satisfied” (19.2% vs. 12.6%) but also to respond “very dissatisfied” (6.3% vs. 1.5%).

Table 3. Marital satisfaction of Korean and Japanese Husbands and Wives

Variables	Korea (%)		Japan (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Relationship with spouse as a whole				
Very satisfied	495 (18.5)	330 (12.6)	723 (30.5)	490 (19.2)
Somewhat satisfied	1,277 (47.6)	1,147 (43.6)	1,414 (59.6)	1,498 (58.8)
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	798 (29.8)	924 (35.2)	-	-
Somewhat dissatisfied	102 (3.8)	188 (7.2)	205 (8.6)	398 (15.6)
Very dissatisfied	8 (0.3)	39 (1.5)	32 (1.3)	160 (6.3)
Total	2,680 (100.0)	2,628 (100.0)	2,374 (100.0)	2,546 (100.0)
Mean (sd)	3.80 (.79)	3.59 (0.85)	3.19 (0.64)	2.91 (0.77)
Mean difference test (t-test)	t = 9.56, p < .001		t = 13.87, p < .001	

Note: The level of marital satisfaction was measured by assigning “very satisfied” 5 points, “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” 3, and “very dissatisfied” 1 for Korean data; for Japanese data, it was measured by assigning “very satisfied” 4 points, and “very dissatisfied” 1.

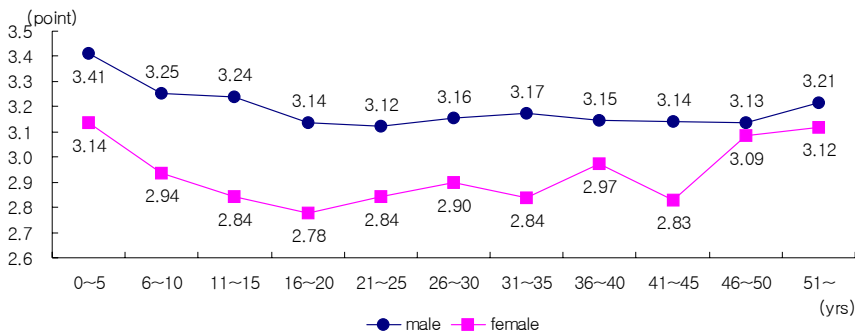
Figure 1. Marital satisfaction over Family Life Course: Korea



Now we examine the relationship between marital satisfaction and the duration of marriage. The duration of marriage is divided into 5 year intervals. Figure 1 shows the changes in Korean husbands and wives' marital satisfaction over family life course. The first 5 years of marriage is a period of the highest marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives. Since then, the average marital satisfaction goes down until 31-35 years in marriage and goes up from that point on for both husbands and wives. During all stages of family life course, the husbands express higher marital satisfaction than the wives on the average. This gender gap of marital satisfaction is statistically significant at all levels except for those who have been married for 50+ years.

The mean marital satisfaction among Japanese husbands and wives according to the duration of marriage is shown in Figure 2. Like Korean couples, Japanese couples' marital satisfaction shows a U-shape curve across family life stages. Japanese husbands and wives feel the highest level of satisfaction with their relationship with the spouses in the first 5 years of marriage. As time goes, the marital satisfaction tends to go down until 16-20 years in marriage. After that time the mean marital satisfaction among wives goes up, while that for husbands stays roughly the same until the longest duration category (51+ years). Japanese wives' marital satisfaction tends to recover from its downhill trend since the period of honeymoon until the time when they put their burden of raising children aside. Gender differences in

Figure 2. Marital satisfaction over Family Life Course: Japan



marital satisfaction in Japan are significant except the last two groups (46-50 years and 51+ years).

Japanese wives' marital satisfaction decreases more drastically soon after the honeymoon period than Japanese husbands, while Korean wives' deteriorating rate of marital satisfaction is in line with Korean husbands'. Partly because of this, gender differences seem to be large among Japanese than Korean couples, though the difference in measurement (5-point scale in Korea and 4-point scale in Japan) makes it difficult to make accurate comparisons.

3. Determinants of Marital Satisfaction

In this section, we examine the effect of various predictor variables including wife's higher level of education and income than her husband and non-traditional gender division of provider roles on Korean and Japanese husbands and wives' marital satisfaction. We first examine Korean couples and then Japanese (see <Table 4> and <Table 5>).

Contrary to the expectation, Korean husbands whose wives have higher levels of education than themselves tend to be more satisfied with their marriages (see <Table 4>).

This effect persisted even when we included such influential predictors as family stress and conjugal interaction variables. On the other hands, the couple's unconventional gender division of provider roles (husband being not the sole family earner) has no significant effect on Korean husband's marital satisfaction. There is no significant effect of wife's earning more than her husband on Korean husband's marital satisfaction, either. As seen in the same table, the wife having a higher education or earning more than her husband, or the couple's unconventional gender division of provider role has no significant effect on Korean wives' marital satisfaction.

All family stress variables have negative impacts on Korean husbands' marital satisfaction (see Model II for Husbands, <Table 4>). The stress due to child-related matters and work-family balance stress have relatively stronger effects on Korean husbands' marital satisfaction. Family stress variables also show negative effects on Korean wives' marital satisfaction, except work-family

<Table 4> Determinants of Marital Satisfaction: Korean Sample
(Standardized Regression Coefficients)

Variables	Husbands			Wives		
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model I	Model II	Model III
Control/demographic variables						
Marriage duration	-0.388***	-0.294***	-0.132**	-0.470***	-0.384***	-0.199***
Marriage duration squared	0.304***	0.193***	0.070	0.355***	0.240***	0.126**
Education	0.166***	0.175***	0.070***	0.064**	0.077***	0.005
Family income	-0.026	-0.026	-0.015	0.062***	0.046**	0.034**
Remarried	0.043**	0.046**	0.038**	0.011	0.016	0.000
Marriage gradients						
Couple's education gap (Hus<Wife=1)	0.051***	0.058***	0.031**	-0.015	-0.008	-0.011
Couple's income gap (Hus<Wife=1)	0.014	0.010	0.005	-0.015	-0.020	-0.022
Hus-working, wife-working	0.025	0.030	0.023	-0.012	0.036	0.026
Hus-not working, wife-working	-0.002	-0.006	0.004	-0.038	-0.008	-0.017
Hus-not working, wife-not working	0.006	-0.011	0.010	0.002	-0.003	-0.001
Family stress						
Stress on household economy		-0.061***	-0.006		-0.160***	-0.061***
Stress due to child-related matters		-0.077***	-0.035**		-0.056***	-0.021
Stress due to parents-related matters		-0.035*	0.005		-0.044**	-0.002
Housework overload		-0.052**	-0.014		-0.104***	-0.024
Work-family balance stress		-0.092***	-0.031*		-0.042	-0.056**
Conjugal interactions						
Quality of dyadic interaction			0.416***			0.486***
Sex life satisfaction			0.214***			0.176***
R-squared	0.061***	0.097***	0.389***	0.052***	0.117***	0.446***
n	2,652	2,652	2,652	2,606	2,606	2,606

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, *** p<0.01

balance stress (see Model II for Wives, <Table 4>). Korean wives' marital satisfaction is more strongly affected by matters related to household economy and housework overload. While most family stress variables are related to marital satisfaction (Model II), these relationships disappear once conjugal interaction variables are included in the equation for both Korean husbands and wives (Model III).

As expected, the quality of conjugal interaction has the strongest effect on Korean husbands and wives' marital satisfaction (see Model III of <Table 4>).

The Korean husbands and wives whose spouse showed great concerns and high appreciation of their ability and efforts are more satisfied with their marital relations. The satisfaction of sexual life also has significant effects on Korean husband and wife's marital satisfaction, but the effect of sex life satisfaction is not as large as the quality of dyadic interaction.

Finally, the Korean husband's education and experience of remarriage positively affect their marital satisfaction, and these relationships are relative stable, remaining significant even when conjugal interaction variables are controlled for. The marital satisfaction is not related to family income at all among Korean husbands. While education is also related to marital satisfaction among Korean wives, the remarriage status does not show any effect. Instead, family income has a positive relationship with Korean wives' marital satisfaction.

Marital duration has a quadratic (U-shaped) relationship with marital satisfaction as has been shown in Figure 1. This non-linear relationship, however, disappear once conjugal interaction variables are included in the regression equation among Korean husbands. Among Korean wives, however, this non-linear relationship persists even when conjugal interaction variables are included. The size of squared terms (how deep the U-shape is), however, decreases when more variables are controlled for, particularly conjugal interactions.

Now let's turn to what make Japanese husbands and wives satisfied with their marriages. As seen in <Table 5>, marriage gradients in education and income do not affect marital satisfaction for Japanese husbands, but non-traditional gender division of provider roles seem to hurt their marital satisfaction. More specifically, Japanese husbands' satisfaction with their marriages is lower, on the average, when both they and wives work or neither they nor their wives work. In comparison, no specific combination of education, income, or employment between the spouses affects Japanese wives' marital satisfaction at all.

The family stress has negative effects on Japanese husbands' marital satisfaction except by the stress due to parents-related matters. Similarly, when Japanese wives experience family stress, they tend to feel lower satisfaction with their marital relationship. However, only two kinds of family

stress variables (related to household economy and housework overload) have statistically significant impacts on Japanese wife's marital satisfaction. Among stress provoking family matters considered in this study, the family economic hardship has the most significant negative effect on Japanese wives' marital satisfaction. There seems to be cross-national differences regarding the stress that hurts marital satisfaction in Korea and Japan. Parent-related matters show no effect on marital satisfaction in Japan, while they show some effects

<Table 5> Determinants of Marital Satisfaction: Japanese Sample
(Standardized Regression Coefficients)

Variables	Husbands			Wives		
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model I	Model II	Model III
Control/demographic variables						
Marriage duration	-0.388 ***	-0.292 ***	-0.168 **	-0.388 ***	-0.298 ***	-0.153 **
Marriage duration squared	0.357 ***	0.244 ***	0.103	0.433 ***	0.281 ***	0.125 **
Education	0.090 ***	0.082 ***	0.023	0.015	0.014	0.015
Family income	0.020	-0.002	-0.005	0.112 ***	0.043 *	0.045 ***
Remarried	-0.013	-0.014	-0.011	0.024	0.027	0.005
Marriage gradients						
Couple's education gap (Hus<Wife=1)	-0.009	-0.013	-0.018	-0.034	-0.017	-0.002
Couple's income gap (Hus<Wife=1)	0.000	-0.002	-0.012	0.031	0.021	0.008
Hus-working, wife-working	-0.030	-0.034	-0.031 *	-0.027	-0.015	-0.014
Hus-not working, wife-working	-0.011	-0.019	-0.004	-0.028	-0.021	-0.018
Hus-not working, wife-not working	-0.041	-0.062 **	-0.038 *	-0.025	-0.034	-0.003
Family stress						
Stress on household economy		-0.092 ***	-0.033 *		-0.211 ***	-0.060 ***
Stress due to child-related matters		-0.091 ***	-0.061 ***		-0.031	-0.019
Stress due to parents-related matters		-0.013	-0.002		-0.006	-0.006
Housework overload		-0.061 **	-0.028		-0.144 ***	-0.040 **
Work-family balance stress		-0.073 ***	-0.026		-0.020	-0.007
Conjugal interactions						
Quality of dyadic interaction			0.322 ***			0.394 ***
Sex life satisfaction			0.468 ***			0.441 ***
R-squared	0.025 ***	0.073 ***	0.490 ***	0.023 ***	0.114 ***	0.563 ***
n	2,652	2,017	2,017	2,119	2,119	2,119

Note: *p<0.10, **p<0.05, *** p<0.01

in Korea, at least before we control for conjugal interaction variables.

The Model III of <Table 5> shows that the most prominent factors to determine Japanese spouses' marital satisfaction are the quality of conjugal interactions. Japanese husbands and wives are more likely to be satisfied with their spouse when they think their spouse listen to their concerns and worries, appreciate their ability and efforts, and offer helpful words and advice. In addition, Japanese spouses who are sexually satisfied tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction. Sex life satisfaction is more important to keep Japanese spouses' marital satisfaction high than the quality of dyadic interaction, unlike Korean spouses, whose marital satisfaction is more influenced by the quality of dyadic interactions.

While Japanese husband's marital satisfaction is positively affected by their educational achievements, Japanese wives' satisfaction is not. On the contrary, Japanese wives' satisfaction with their marriages is positively influenced by their family income while their husbands' marital satisfaction is not. For both Japanese husbands and wives, non-linear effects of marriage duration on marital satisfaction are observed. Just like the Korean sample, the non-linear relationship between marriage duration and marital satisfaction persists when interaction variables are controlled for Japanese wives, but not for husbands.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Systematic comparisons of Korean and Japanese data on satisfaction with marital relationships produced both similarities and differences in this key concepts in people of these countries. While the overall level of satisfaction is relatively high in both countries, men's satisfactions are on the average higher than women's in both countries. This pattern also holds true for the entire family life cycle stages. Since similar findings were reported in the United States (Kamo 2000), it should not be quickly interpreted as an evidence of male dominance in these countries resulting from the Confucian ideology. Gender differences in marital satisfaction in East Asian countries, however, have a serious consequence in their society. As was stated earlier, East Asian countries suffer from extremely low fertility rates in the past decade or so.

Primarily due to the Confucian ideology emphasizing morality and family lineage, birth out of wedlock is very uncommon in these countries. Thus, fertilities in these countries are directly related to marriage rates. Anticipating unsatisfying marriages, women in these East Asian countries tend to delay, if not abandon, marriages, and this fact is directly related to their low fertility rates. In most Western countries, birth out of wedlock has become prevalent, and fertilities are not directly related to marriage rates any longer.

The U-shaped relationship between marital satisfaction and marital duration we found in Korea and Japan in this study needs to be carefully interpreted. Is it a result of cohort effect (people who married recently and 40 years ago are more satisfied than those who married in between) or marriage attrition (people who have been married for 40+ years are selected few without divorcing for that many years)? It doesn't appear that way in Korea and Japan. Then, we need to explain this pattern. If satisfaction with marital relationships increases late in marriages, this may be related to lightened burdens of raising children and/or financially providing enough for the entire family. The former applies more to women and the latter to men although men and women often share these responsibilities even in Korea and Japan. Korea and Japan are both known to be highly competitive in educational advancements. Children in these countries compete for good high schools and colleges early in their life, and their mothers are often held responsible for their educational achievements. The pressure of educational achievements is not only upon children but also upon their mothers. Once married women are freed of that responsibility, their relationships with their husbands should improve. If that's true, we should see either weaker or no non-linear relationship among married people, particularly women, without children. Our findings, however, do not fully support this conjecture. The effects of stress due to child-related matters on marital satisfaction exist only for Korean men, Korean women, and Japanese men. The effect for Korean women disappears once conjugal interaction variables are included in the equation.

As for predictor variables, the quality of conjugal interactions is the most important determinant of marital satisfaction for all four groups. It is interesting that Korean husbands and wives' marital satisfaction tend to be

more influenced by such qualitative interactions as deep trust, high appreciation, and caring spouse's concerns and worries than satisfaction with their sexual life, but for Japanese husbands and wives the sex life seems more, at least equally, important. As discussed above, the stress from various family matters tends to lower the couples' marital satisfaction. The stress due to parents-related matters has significant effects only on Korean husbands' and wives' marital satisfaction, though this effect disappears after controlling for the quality of conjugal interactions. The fact that this factor has no effect among Japanese men and women may indicate that the notion of filial responsibility has weakened in that country in comparison to Korea, where this idea is still quite prevalent.

The stress due to household economy hardship tends to maintain its effect on marital satisfaction even after controlling for the quality of conjugal interactions, except for Korean husbands. The negative effect of housework overload on marital satisfaction seems non-existent among Japanese wives. This is interesting given popular accounts of Japanese wives sandwiched between their jobs and family responsibility. We may speculate that wives in Japan withdraw from labor force anticipating the difficulty to maintain this balance.

Lastly, the couple's gender incongruence in education, one of the marriage gradient effects, turns out to be significant on deciding the level of marital satisfaction among Korean husbands only in the direction opposite to what was expected. Korean husbands tend to consider the wife's higher education than themselves positively rather than feeling it as jeopardizing their authority as a head of family. On the other hands, the marital satisfaction is not significantly affected by the wife earning higher income than her husband among any of the four groups. As another indicator of patriarchal effect, deviation from the traditional gender division of provider roles between husband and wife does not seem to have any effects on the couple's marital satisfaction, except that Japanese husbands tend to feel lower marital satisfaction when neither or both spouses work.

Considering the overall effects of variables related to patriarchal family system of Korea and Japan on marital satisfaction, the legacy of

Confucianism emphasizing strong patriarchal authority does not seem to linger over husband and wife's relationship any longer. In both Korea and Japan, the wife's working outside the home has become more acceptable even though the division of household work between husband and wife is still far from equal.

Since the data used for this study are not the one originally developed for the purpose of comparative analyses between Korea and Japan, there are some limitations. It is, for example, impossible to compare directly the level of marital satisfaction between the two countries, and we are often unable to find comparable independent variables because of differences in measurements, question wordings, limited availability of question items for scale composition, etc. Despite such limitations, this study gives a valuable opportunity for looking into the similarity and difference of the two nations in terms of the change in marital satisfaction across family life course, as well as the determinants of marital satisfaction.

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한일 부부의 결혼만족도 비교

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본 연구의 목적은 국가 간 비교 관점에서 한국과 일본의 가족생활주기에 따른 결혼만족도 변화 패턴을 분석하고, 결혼만족도에 영향을 미치는 요인을 탐색하는 것이다. 이를 위해 2003년 한국과 2004년 일본에서 각각 조사한 전국가족조사 자료를 사용하였으며, 배우자와 동거하고 있는 5,308명의 한국인 성인남녀와 4,920명의 일본인 성인남녀를 대상으로 한 설문조사자료를 분석에 사용하였다. 결혼관계에서의 한국과 일본 간 문화적 차이와 유사성을 살펴보기 위해 교육수준과 결혼기간, 가구수입과 재혼 여부를 통제한 가운데 교육수준, 소득수준, 취업에 있어서 비전형적인 부부결합(marriage gradients), 가족스트레스, 부부 상호작용의 질이 한국과 일본 부부의 결혼 만족도에 미치는 영향을 위계적 회귀분석을 통해 살펴보았다. 그 결과, 한국과 일본 모두 가족생활주기에 따른 U자형 결혼만족도 변화패턴을 보였으며, 전 생애에 걸쳐 일관적으로 남편이 부인보다 결혼만족도가 높았다. 한국과 일본 부부의 결혼만족도에 영향을 미치는 가장 중요한 요인은 공통적으로 배우자에 대한 깊은 신뢰와 관심, 성생활 만족을 포함한 질 높은 부부 상호작용이었으며, 한국인 부부는 성생활 만족보다는 부부 상호작용의 질이 결혼만족도에 더 큰 영향을 미쳤던 반면 일본인 부부는 성생활 만족이 더 큰 영향을 미쳤다.

핵심단어: 결혼만족도, 가족스트레스, 부부 상호작용의 질, 가족생활주기