

# Family Values in South Korean Society: Marital and Sexual Values in Gender, Age, and Protestantism Contexts

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine differences in marital and sexual values according to gender, age, and Protestantism contexts using the 2012 and 2018 Korea General Social Surveys. Samples for marital values were from the 2012 survey (N=797 adults aged 20 and over), and those for sexual values were from the 2018 survey (N=550 adults aged 20 and over). There were four domains in marital values (happiness, child, cohabitation, and divorce) and three domains in sexual values (premarital intercourse, extramarital intercourse, and same-sex intercourse). We applied ANCOVA and post hoc analysis to examine the differences in each domain via gender, age, and Protestantism contexts. Results on marital values did not show significant interactions between gender, age group, and Protestantism contexts, while age differences were consistently significant in all domains of marital values. In results about sexual values, there were significant interactions between gender, age, and Protestantism contexts in all domains of sexual values. The findings of this study may promote an understanding of the dynamics and diversity of Korean contexts on marital and sexual values.

## Keywords

Age group; gender; marital value; Protestantism; sexual value

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## Introduction

Changes in family values in contemporary South Korean society have been dynamic and have become a subject of social issues. In studies on social change in Korea, family values have been treated as an essential variable. Park (2002), a sociologist who explained Korea's unique family-centered culture as familism, noted that Korea's capitalist structure developed in the process of combining it with the family values of Confucianism. Family values have mainly referred to family culture as a functional unit for national and social stability, such as functionalism. However, with the expansion of feminist research, the concept of family is expanding, and family values are also changing (Gilbert, 1999). Therefore, family values are being used in various contexts, from a functionalist position concerned with the dissolution of the traditional family to a position criticizing the violation of sexual diversity by the modern nuclear family model (VanEvery, 1999). In this study, family values are understood as social and cultural norms regarding family composition. From this perspective, family values are used to encompass all family relationships, including marriage, childbirth, nurturing, divorce, and gender norms (Brighouse & Swift, 2014). Like other social values, family values are closely related to their historical context.

In this aspect, conflicts regarding family values take the form of social issues, for instance, the abolition of abortion and the enactment of a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that embraces homosexuality. According to the life course theory (LCT), humans are social beings who exist and live within a macroscopic context; their individual lives consist of various factors influenced by the past and present. In addition, events experienced within the life course affect individuals and construct the values they follow (Beets et al., 1999; Elder et al., 2003). Thus, heterogeneity in life courses leads to differences in family values between genders, age groups, and religious groups.

According to LCT, the development of individuals and families is based on social norms, which vary according to time and context (Elder & Giele, 2009). Individuals born within the same generation have similar life cycles, share similar sociocultural experiences, and adopt similar social norms. On the other hand, individuals from different generations do not share similar sociocultural experiences and hence have different social norms. For example, in a society that adhered to patriarchal values and roles assigned by gender, men and women socialized with different social expectations. The assigned roles have led to different family desires and values (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Kaufman, 2005). Since the Korean War, Protestantism has been a major religion in Korea and has significantly influenced politics, society, and culture (Kim, 2002). In recent years, conflicts in family values based on religious beliefs, such as premarital chastity and homosexuality, have led to social controversies between conservative Protestants and non-Protestants, especially in the younger generations (Brahmana et al., 2018).

In this respect, this study intends to analyze the influence of various variables that affect marital value. Marital value is related to various demographic, social, and cultural factors and sexual value (Carroll et al., 2007; Christopher & Sprecher, 2000; Jarska, 2019). Marriage is influenced by several factors, including relationships with partners and careers (Hoffnung, 2004), socioeconomic status (Gibson-Davis et al., 2005), and religion (Burdette et al., 2007). In a study that defines attitudes and values toward marriage as a marriage paradigm, it is suggested that marriage value is composed of various dimensions such as marriage process, timing, and context (Willoughby et al., 2015).

## Theoretical background

### Definitions and characteristics of marital and sexual values

Family value is a comprehensive attitude toward the family and an organized cultural and ideological system to determine the desirability of the family (Stacey, 2012). Marital and sexual values are a subcomponent of family values. Marital values are the norms individuals follow in spouse selection and marriage and attitudes toward marriage, cohabitation, and non-marriage. However, sexual values are not just about 'sexual' values. Sexual value encompasses sexual actions, such as individual and organizational attitudes toward gender and specific sexual norms formed in social relationships (Rubin, 2007). Especially in modern society where political pluralism is expanding, sexual values are also a space for various ideological interactions. Thus, sexual values are inevitably political, and at the same time, their contents are constantly changing according to historical and cultural contexts (Padgug, 2007).

Some researchers believe that changes in values lead to changes in behavior. Others state that changes in overall social values occur after changes in behavior, while another group believes that changes occur in both variables simultaneously (Axinn & Thornton, 2000; Hilbig & Zettler, 2009). Like this, it is hard to identify the causality between changes in behavior and values related to marriage and sex. However, the marital and sexual values of Korean society are simultaneously and rapidly changing, resulting in conflict between genders, age groups, and religious groups.

### Marital and sexual values by gender

Traditionally, men and women have had different roles and interests within families. Within patriarchy, men typically consider the benefits of marriage more than the costs, while women perceive the costs more than the benefits. As a result, women are less likely than men to have a positive attitude toward institutional marriage along with a negative attitude toward divorce. However, the power of social restriction is more significant on women than men when women deviate from marriage norms, such as marrying late or divorcing (Hsin, 2018). A previous study reported that women have a greater desire to get married than men (Blakemore et al., 2005). Women tend to think that unmarried women are deficient (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003), and unmarried women experience various social pressures to marry (Lewis & Moon, 1997). In addition, women who prefer conservative gender roles emphasizing parental roles may have a stronger motivation towards marriage than women who prefer feministic gender values (Blakemore et al., 2005).

According to a meta-analytic review on gender differences in sexuality (Petersen & Hyde, 2010), men showed more permissive attitudes toward sexuality in general than women. Still, most effect sizes about gender differences were small. However, gender differences in attitudes toward casual sex revealed medium effect size in which men reported more permissive attitudes than women in the same study.

In the Korean cultural context, gendered sexual norms and male-dominated sexual culture also apply to attitudes toward extramarital relationships. Both men and women have internalized the gendered perception that men can often engage in extramarital relationships, but women should never do so. However, males were still more likely to have a permissive

attitude toward premarital sex and engage in sexual intercourse outside of marriage than women (Sohn & Chun, 2005).

Studies on attitudes toward homosexuality report that females are more tolerant than men of homosexual values (Basow & Johnson, 2000; Mohr & Sedlacek, 2000). This difference in attitudes may be due to cultural factors that lead to distinct experiences based on gender rather than biological differences between the sexes (Klassen et al., 1989; Oliver & Hyde, 1993). Some scholars suggested that the negative attitude toward homosexuality is not dependent on gender but is primarily associated with traditional gender roles (Herek & Capitano, 1995). Since previous studies have mainly undertaken gendered discussions on marital and sexual values for the younger generation, this study seeks to expand the discussion to cover all generations.

## **Marital and sexual values by age groups**

People of the same age group, especially those born at similar periods or similar cultures, experience similar life cycle processes. They embody similar values, attitudes, and behaviors (Egri & Ralston, 2004). It is essential and valuable to introduce the generational concept in values studies because differences between generations can explain individual differences within the overall pattern of social change. For example, advanced studies report that the younger generation is more pessimistic and skeptical about marriage and childbirth. In comparison, the older generation is positive about parenting and the institution of marriage (Keskiner, 2020).

Previous studies on sexual values and generation of Korean society have primarily focused on attitudes toward premarital sex and homosexuality among college students and unmarried youth in their 20s and 30s (Cho & Cho, 2012). Scholars reported that the younger generation has a free and open attitude toward sex due to the influence of their peers and an influx of liberal sexual culture in South Korea. Thus, there is a gap in sexual values between younger and older generations in Korea. However, some studies revealed that the gap between generations is not as significant because all generations transmit values downward and retain traditional values (Eun, 2006). In addition, it is necessary to look at the point where different contexts and generations intersect since there may be differences between groups and social contexts within the same generation.

## **Marital and sexual values according to Protestantism**

Studies reporting the relationship between religious beliefs, such as Protestantism, and factors such as happiness, cohabitation, and divorce, which were previously reviewed in the gender factor, are also conducted. Religion is an area of extensive research used as a core component of values. For example, religious homogeneity with a partner can influence marital happiness (Myers, 2006). A study confirming the relationship between Protestant beliefs and conservatism toward divorce shows that religious factors can narrow the gender gap in divorce (Kapinus & Flowers, 2008).

Korea has a long-standing cultural conflict between the Confucian family-centered ideology and forms of Christianity, especially Protestantism. From the early 1900s, when Protestantism began to spread in Korea, conflicts with traditional values based on existing Confucianism were treated as an essential issue (Bhang, 2021). The most conservative and fundamentalist

religious belief in Korean society, Protestantism maintains a negative stance towards deviation from traditional family values and structures (Choi, 2015). In Korea, Protestantism, connected with strict abstinent moral values, adheres to strict and conservative sexual values that discourage physical pleasure and regard procreation as the sole purpose of sex (Lim, 2014). Lim (2014) compared the family values of Protestants and non-Protestants through in-depth interviews. They observed that Protestants consider marriage and childbirth an honored experience and are less tolerant of divorce than non-Protestants. Han (2010) examined the family values of Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and atheists and showed that Protestants had the most negative attitudes toward divorce out of all the groups. These findings indicated that the Korean church supports the formation and maintenance of families based on the traditional and institutional marriage system.

## Research method

### Data

This study used the Korea General Social Survey (KGSS), which contained nationally representative data (Kim et al., 2019). The KGSS data were obtained through face-to-face interviews, and participants were selected through multi-level stratified random sampling. The KGSS has been collected annually since 2003 for adults over 18 years old and includes a wide range of contents, such as attitudes toward politics and the economy, social networks and resources, leisure, and sports. Additionally, KGSS is appropriate data for identifying marital and sexual values according to gender, age group, and religious beliefs. It contains family values such as concerns about marriage or childbirth. Currently, a total of 13 data sets have been accumulated from 2003 to 2018. Also, KGSS is not a panel data repeatedly collecting data on the same person and same measurements but a trend data collecting new samples every year with partially different measurements. We utilized two KGSS datasets. The first was KGSS in 2012, which contained the most recently measured marital values (N=797), and the second was KGSS in 2018, which included the most up-to-date sexual values (N=550).

### Variables

#### Marital value

Marital value constitutes the respondent's ideas concerning marriage. Four items were considered about marital value in the KGSS 2012 dataset: 1) A married person is usually happier than an unmarried person (happiness); 2) Those who want children should be married (child); 3) It is okay to live together without being willing to marry (cohabitation); and 4) If the problem between the couple cannot be resolved, divorce is the best solution (divorce). The response to each question was measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'completely agree = 1' to 'completely disagree = 5'. Higher values represented the more contemporary ideas of marriage as items about cohabitation and divorce were recoded reversely. As each item represents a different domain of marital value, we put these items into distinctive analytic models individually.

## Sexual values

Sexual values included three items in the KGSS 2018 dataset: premarital intercourse, extramarital intercourse, and same-sex intercourse. Premarital intercourse was measured by responses to 'Do you think it is right or wrong to have sex before marriage?' Extramarital intercourse was measured by responses to 'Do you think it is right or wrong whether a married person has sex with someone who is not their spouse?' Same-sex intercourse was measured in response to 'Do you think it is right or wrong to have sex with adults of the same-sex?' The response to each question was measured on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 'very wrong = 1' to 'very right = 4'. The higher values indicated having a more contemporary attitude toward sexual values. We put these items into analytic models separately because each item represented different sexual contexts.

## Gender, age group, and Protestantism

Gender was coded by two categories, male and female (Male = 0, Female = 1). Age group was coded by age decades beginning at 20 and continuing through to the 90s, based on the assumption that experiences vary with age and that these differences are most pronounced at 10-year intervals. Studies of generational marriage values tend to compare the generations of parents and children (Jennings et al., 2012) or the age group categorized by decade (Twenge & Blake, 2020). Therefore, the age group consisted of six groups representing 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s and older, because of the insufficient samples in their 70s, 80s, and 90s. Protestantism, which accounts for 44.9% of the Korean religious population, who answered that they have a religion in the Korean census (Statistics Korea, 2017). We compared the Protestant group with atheist group (atheist = 0, Protestantism = 1).

## Covariates

Covariates included education, marital status, employment status, and family income in the 2012 and 2018 datasets. The education was coded as five categories with 'uneducated = 0,' 'elementary school = 1,' 'middle school = 2,' 'high school = 3,' 'undergraduate = 4,' and 'graduate or above = 5.' Employment status was coded as 'unemployed = 0' and 'employed = 1.' Marital status was coded as 'without a partner = 0' and 'with a partner = 1.' The family income was the monthly average household income. The higher scores indicated higher income levels. We made the income variable five categories based on the 20% percentile (low-low = 1, low-high = 2, middle = 3, high-low = 4, high-high = 5).

## Analysis

We performed a three-step analysis using STATA 15.1 (Stata Corporation, 2017). First, descriptive statistical analysis was performed to grasp the general tendency of the sociodemographic characteristics among samples. Second, we used ANCOVA to examine marital and sexual values according to gender, age group, and Protestantism and their interactions with covariates. There were four ANCOVA models on marital values (happiness, child, cohabitation, and divorce model) and three ANCOVA models on sexual values (premarital intercourse, extramarital intercourse, and same-sex intercourse model). Third, post hoc tests were applied to describe specific significant main effects or interaction effects. We performed the Bonferroni test (Agresti, 2018) to capture subgroup differences within gender, age group, and Protestantism if the main effects were significant in ANCOVA models.

Also, we made line graphs with predictive margins to show the interaction between various contexts if the interaction terms were significant in ANCOVA models. We applied the weights on ANCOVA analysis and post hoc test to precisely generalize statistical parameters.

## Results

### Descriptive characteristics of the samples

Descriptive statistics were conducted to understand the sociodemographic characteristics of the study sample (Table 1). In KGSS 2012, 47.55% of the sample were male, and 52.45% were female. Of the age group, 16.69% were 20s, 16.56% were 30s, 19.57% were 40s, 16.81% were 50s, 13.3% were 60s, and 17.07% were 70s and older. There were 65.62% of the sample who were atheists, and 34.38% were Protestant. In KGSS 2018, 48.91% were male, and 51.09% were female. Of the age group, 17.82% were 20s, 16.55% were 30s, 18.18% were 40s, 18.36% were 50s, 12.18% were 60s, and 16.91% were 70s and older. There were 68.91% of the sample who were atheists, and 31.09% were Protestant.

**Table 1:** Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Study Samples (N(%))

	KGSS 2012 for marital values (N=797)	KGSS 2018 for sexual values (N=550)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	379(47.55)	269(48.91)
Female	418(52.45)	281(51.09)
<b>Age Group</b>		
20s	133(16.69)	98(17.82)
30s	132(16.56)	91(16.55)
40s	156(19.57)	100(18.18)
50s	134(16.81)	101(18.36)
60s	106(13.30)	67(12.18)
70s and older	136(17.07)	93(16.91)
<b>Protestantism</b>		
Atheist	523(65.62)	379(68.91)
Protestant	274(34.38)	171(31.09)
<b>Education</b>		
Uneducated	81(10.16)	31(5.64)
Elementary school	108(13.55)	53(9.64)
Middle school	75(9.41)	49(8.91)
High school	300(37.64)	196(35.64)
College school	210(26.35)	184(33.45)
Graduate school	23(2.89)	37(6.73)
<b>Employment status</b>		
Unemployed	343(43.04)	222(40.36)
Employed	454(56.96)	328(59.64)
<b>Marital status</b>		
Without a partner	318(39.90)	241(43.82)
With a partner	479(60.10)	309(56.18)

	KGSS 2012 for marital values (N=797)	KGSS 2018 for sexual values (N=550)
<b>Family income (month)</b>		
Low-low	160(20.08)	111(20.18)
Low-high	170(21.33)	120(21.82)
Middle	169(21.20)	103(18.73)
High-low	158(19.82)	106(19.27)
High-high	140(17.57)	110(20.00)

## Marital values by gender, age group, and Protestantism

ANCOVA results about marital values showed that all interaction terms were not significant (Table 2). However, several main effects of gender, age group, and Protestantism were significant. In the happiness model of marital value, the dependent variable, i.e., the marital value related to happiness, was measured by 'a married person is usually happier than an unmarried person.' The main effects of gender ( $F=4.42, p<.05$ ), age group ( $F=4.27, p<.001$ ), and Protestantism ( $F=7.40, p<.01$ ) were significant.

**Table 2:** Results of ANCOVA for Marital Values by Gender, Age Group, and Protestantism ( $F$ )

	Marital values (N=797)			
	Happiness	Child	Cohabitation	Divorce
Gender	4.42*	5.22*	0.01	0.01
Age group	4.27***	4.13**	6.18***	4.54***
Protestantism	7.40**	3.15	1.67	2.64
Gender×Age group	1.02	1.07	0.75	1.10
Gender×Protestantism	1.57	1.70	0.87	0.81
Age group×Protestantism	0.38	0.57	0.79	1.99
Gender×Age group×Protestantism	1.68	1.77	0.88	1.70
Education	1.55	1.47	0.50	1.89
Employment status	3.63	1.79	2.84	0.11
Marital status	9.40**	3.30	2.39	6.23*
Family income	0.89	1.14	1.97	2.00
Model	3.23***	3.27***	3.93***	2.18***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.126	0.127	0.149	0.089
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.087	0.089	0.111	0.048

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

Table 3 showed specific differences in gender, age group, and Protestantism based on the post hoc analysis. Women ( $M=2.61, SD=1.05$ ) more disagree on the association between happiness and marriage than men ( $M=2.37, SD=1.08$ ), the 40s ( $M=2.73, SD=1.02$ ) more disagree than the 50s ( $M=2.27, SD=1.09$ ), the 60s ( $M=2.10, SD=0.97$ ), and the 70s and older ( $M=1.98, SD=0.94$ ). The atheist ( $M=2.57, SD=1.06$ ) more disagree than the Protestant ( $M=2.32, SD=1.09$ ). Additionally, marital status had the main effect in this model ( $F=9.40, p<.01$ ), and people who had a partner ( $M=2.60, SD=1.09$ ) more disagree than people who did not have a



partner (M=2.42, SD=1.06).

In the child model of marital value, the dependent variable was measured by ‘those who want children should be married.’ The main effects of gender (F=4.13,  $p<.01$ ) and age group (F=5.22,  $p<.05$ ) were significant in this model. As a result of the post hoc test, women (M=2.03, SD=1.04) had a more contemporary perspective than men on the association between marriage and childbirth (M=1.76, SD=0.92). People in their 50s (M=1.62, SD=0.81) and 60s (M=1.48, SD=0.68) had less contemporary perspective on marriage and childbirth than people in the 20s (M=2.15, SD=1.11), 30s (M=1.99, SD=1.02), and 40s (M=1.99, SD=1.00). Protestantism did not have a significant main effect on the child model.

In the cohabitation model of marital value, the dependent variable was measured by ‘it is okay to live together without being willing to marry.’ The main effect of age group was significant (F=6.18,  $p<.001$ ) in this model. People in their 50s (M=2.00, SD=1.07) and 60s (M=1.72, SD=0.97) had less contemporary perspective on cohabitation than people in the 20s (M=2.88, SD=1.09), 30s (M=2.80, SD=1.17), and 40s (M=2.53, SD=1.20). Gender and Protestantism did not show a significant main effect in the cohabitation model.

In the divorce model of marital value, the dependent variable was measured by ‘if the problem between the couple cannot be resolved, divorce is the best solution.’ The main effect of age group was significant (F=4.54,  $p<.001$ ). People in the 40s (M=3.04, SD=1.31) showed more agreement on divorce than people in the 20s (M=2.62, SD=1.18) and 30s (M=2.74, SD=1.19). Like the cohabitation model, gender and Protestantism were not significant in the divorce model. Moreover, marital status showed a significant main effect in the divorce model, in which people who had a partner (M=2.74, SD=1.27) more disagree with the divorce option than people who did not have a partner (M=2.73, SD=1.30; F=6.23,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 3:** Results of Post Hoc Analysis and Average Marital Values by Gender, Age Group, and Protestantism (M(SD))

	Marital values (N=797)			
	Happiness	Child	Cohabitation	Divorce
<b>Total</b>	2.48(1.07)	1.89(0.99)	2.48(1.20)	2.73(1.30)
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	2.37(1.08) <sup>a</sup>	1.76(0.92) <sup>a</sup>	2.53(1.22)	2.75(1.33)
Female	2.61(1.05) <sup>b</sup>	2.03(1.04) <sup>b</sup>	2.44(1.18)	2.71(1.26)
<b>Age group</b>				
20s	2.57(1.01)	2.15(1.11) <sup>a</sup>	2.88(1.09) <sup>a</sup>	2.62(1.18) <sup>a</sup>
30s	2.65(1.13)	1.99(1.02) <sup>a</sup>	2.80(1.17) <sup>a</sup>	2.74(1.19) <sup>a</sup>
40s	2.73(1.02) <sup>a</sup>	1.99(1.00) <sup>a</sup>	2.53(1.20) <sup>a</sup>	3.04(1.31) <sup>b</sup>
50s	2.27(1.09) <sup>b</sup>	1.62(0.81) <sup>b</sup>	2.00(1.07) <sup>b</sup>	2.87(1.43)
60s	2.10(0.97) <sup>b</sup>	1.48(0.68) <sup>b</sup>	1.72(0.97) <sup>b</sup>	2.38(1.33)
70s and older	1.98(0.94) <sup>b</sup>	1.59(0.76)	2.13(1.25)	2.29(1.33)
<b>Protestantism</b>				
Atheist	2.57(1.06) <sup>a</sup>	1.96(1.00)	2.56(1.20)	2.80(1.29)
Protestant	2.32(1.09) <sup>b</sup>	1.75(0.94)	2.34(1.19)	2.60(1.29)

*Note:* There were significant differences between a and b from the post hoc analysis after ANCOVA.

## Sexual values by gender, age group, and Protestantism

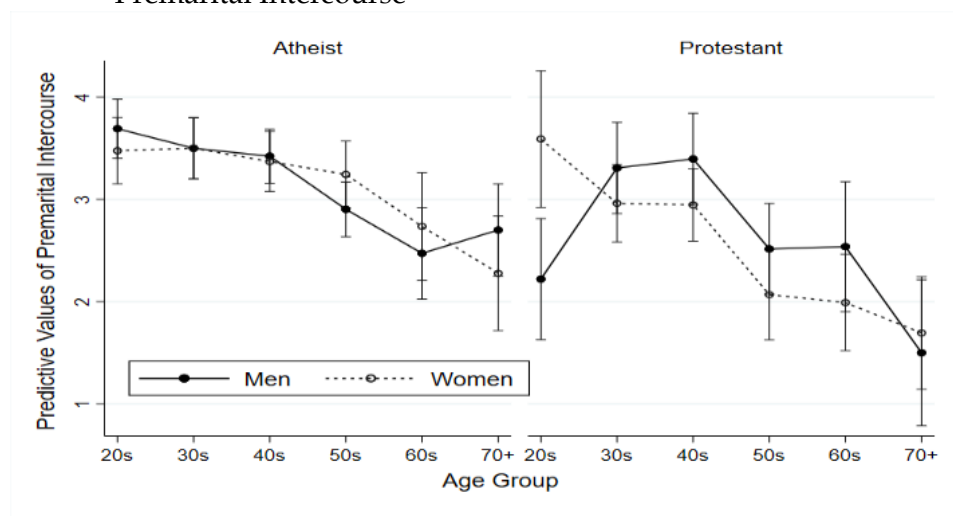
All three ANCOVA models about sexual values revealed significant interaction effects between gender, age group, and Protestantism (Table 4). In the premarital intercourse model, the three-way interaction term between gender, age group, and Protestantism was significant ( $F=4.04, p<.001$ ). In detail, there was no significant difference between men and women across all age groups among the atheist group (Figure 1). In the Protestant group, however, there was a significant gender difference among the 20s. Women in the 20s had a more contemporary perspective on premarital intercourse than men in the 20s.

**Table 4:** Results of ANCOVA for Sexual Values by Gender, Age Group, and Protestantism ( $F$ )

	Sexual values (N=550)		
	Premarital intercourse	Extramarital intercourse	Same-sex intercourse
Gender	0.08	15.62***	1.96
Age group	12.08***	1.74	4.87***
Protestantism	35.69***	0.00	26.18***
Gender×Age group	1.69	1.15	3.35**
Gender×Protestantism	0.02	5.19*	0.29
Age group×Protestantism	1.65	1.59	1.34
Gender×Age group×Protestantism	4.04***	0.21	1.53
Education	0.40	2.16	0.91
Employment status	2.35	0.39	0.03
Marital status	2.54	1.26	3.98*
Family income	1.41	2.12	0.57
Model	7.10***	2.30***	4.66***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.319	0.132	0.235
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.274	0.075	0.185

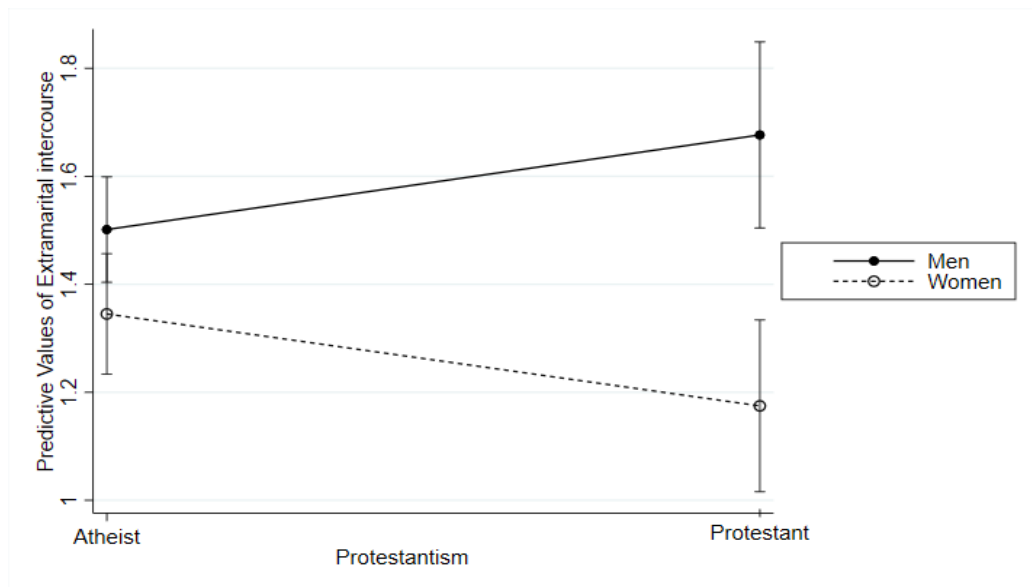
Note: \* $p<0.10$ , \*\* $p<0.05$  \*\*\* $p<0.01$

**Figure 1:** The Interactions Between Gender, Age Group, and Protestantism on Premarital Intercourse



In the extramarital intercourse model, the interaction between gender and Protestantism was significant ( $F=5.19, p<.05$ ). Women had a more negative attitude toward extramarital intercourse than men among the Protestants, while there is no gender difference among atheists (Figure 2). There were no additional significant interaction terms.

**Figure 2:** The Interactions Between Gender and Protestantism on Extramarital Intercourse



In the same-sex intercourse model, the interaction between gender and age group was significant ( $F=3.35, p<.01$ ). Women had a more positive attitude toward same-sex intercourse than men among the 20s (Figure 3). In comparison, there are no gender differences in other age groups. Protestantism had the main effect in the same-sex intercourse model ( $F=26.18, p<.001$ ). The Protestants ( $M=1.58, SD=1.01$ ) had a more negative attitude on same-sex intercourse than the atheist ( $M=2.29, SD=1.24$ ) (Table 5). Also, marital status showed a significant main effect in the same-sex intercourse model, in which people who had a partner ( $M=2.31, SD=1.26$ ) had a more positive perspective on the same-sex intercourse than people who did not have a partner ( $M=1.94, SD=1.18; F=3.98, p<.05$ ).

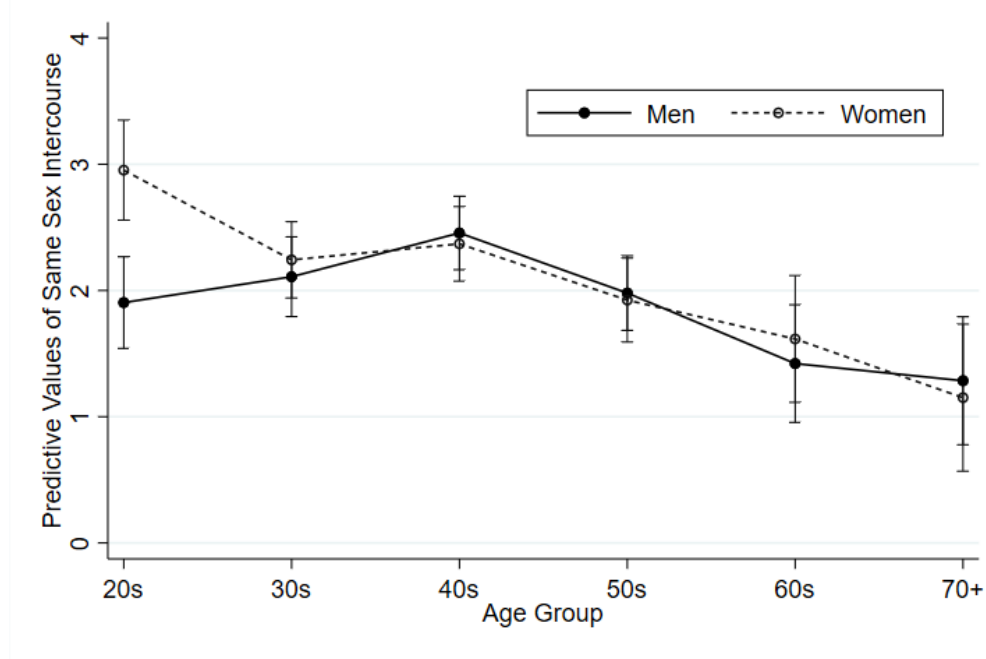
**Table 5:** Results of Post Hoc Analysis and Average Sexual Values by Gender, Age Group, and Protestantism (M(SD))

	Sexual values (N=550)		
	Premarital intercourse	Extramarital intercourse	Same-sex intercourse
<b>Total</b>	3.07(1.03)	1.42(0.74)	2.07(1.22)
<b>Gender</b>			
Male	3.15(0.98)	1.55(0.85)	2.04(1.21)
Female	2.98(1.07)	1.28(0.58)	2.11(1.24)
<b>Age group</b>			
20s	3.52(0.77)	1.48(0.82)	2.57(1.23)
30s	3.38(0.82)	1.41(0.74)	2.14(1.15)
40s	3.31(0.85)	1.59(0.86)	2.34(1.32)
50s	2.83(1.02)	1.31(0.59)	1.91(1.18)
60s	2.34(1.06)	1.33(0.66)	1.42(0.88)

	Sexual values (N=550)		
	Premarital intercourse	Extramarital intercourse	Same-sex intercourse
70-90 ages	2.10(1.17)	1.19(0.51)	1.26(0.61)
<b>Protestantism</b>			
Atheist	3.25(0.93)	1.43(0.73)	2.29(1.24) <sup>a</sup>
Protestant	2.65(1.12)	1.38(0.76)	1.58(1.01) <sup>b</sup>

*Note:* There were significant differences between a and b from the post hoc analysis after ANCOVA.

**Figure 3:** The Interactions Between Gender and Age Group on Same-Sex Intercourse



## Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the differences in marital and sexual values between gendered, generational, and Protestant contexts and interactions between the contexts in South Korea. The significant findings and discussions are as follows.

First, there were significant gendered differences of marital values in happiness and the child domain of marital values. Only a few women believe that marriage life is happier than single life compared to men. More women also disagree that people who want children should be married compared to men. It suggested that the romantic discourse on marriage and the solid relationship between marriage and childbirth are no longer taken for granted in South Korean society. Women, in particular, have a more liberal view on this. Scholars previously discussed that men and women socialized with different social expectations, typically leading to different family desires and values (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Kaufman, 2005). In the happiness of marital values, Protestant groups exhibited more conservative marital values than atheist groups. This finding reflects that Protestants espoused beliefs that marriage is sacred and is the way to follow their God's will (Lim, 2014).

Second, the findings from this study showed changes and diversity of family values according to time and context (Elder & Giele, 2009; Gilbert, 1999). There were generational differences in marital values in all domains. In the happiness, child, and cohabitation domain of marital

values, people in their 40s and younger generations generally reported more contemporary values than those in their 50s and older generations. This finding is consistent with previous studies focusing on the differences of marital value by generation, in that older generations tend to exhibit conservative marital values than younger ones (Eun, 2001). In the case of divorce, contrastively, those in their 40s showed more contemporary values than the younger generations. This finding is different from the general tendency of generational trends (VanEvery, 1999). In previous studies, the children's generation, including those in their teens and 20s, tended to have a negative attitude toward divorce compared to their parents' generation (Tasker, 2013). This characteristic seems to be due to the negative experiences formed during the divorce process of the parents' generation.

Third, more complex interactions between gender, age group, and Protestant contexts existed in terms of sexual values than marital values. Regarding attitudes toward premarital intercourse, the interaction effect between gender, age group, and Protestantism was statistically significant. The older the age, the more negative attitudes they exhibit toward premarital sex among atheists. This finding supports previous findings that younger generations accept value changes more easily, such as the advancing culture of sexual liberality, and free and open attitudes toward sex (Cho & Cho, 2012). The gender difference in premarital intercourse was not significant among this group. In the case of Protestants, the younger generation is more likely to experience conflicts or diversity because of gendered differences in attitude toward premarital sex than the older generation. Although the age group with the lowest percentage of religious people is those in their teens and 20s, the generation most active in religious activities is also those in their teens and 20s (Gallup Korea, 2021). Currently, among young Koreans in their 20s, the number of Protestant women is higher than Protestant men (Statistics Korea, 2017). In general, very few young men agree with Protestant values, and the young men remaining in Protestantism have conservative premarital sexual values who fully agree with Protestant values. As people, it is possible that these gender differences were noticeable only in their 20s. Suppose the moving away from Protestantism among young men is prominent. In that case, there is a possibility that the gender gap with premarital values within the Protestant context will be further strengthened in the future.

Fourth, the interaction between gender and Protestantism was significant on extramarital intercourse in sexual values. Specifically, there was no gender difference among the atheist, while women showed more negative attitudes than men among the Protestants. This finding reflected different socialization processes regarding gender depending on whether or not people are in a Protestantism context. Until recently, extramarital intercourse was recognized as a legal reason for divorce in Korean society (Korea Ministry of Government Legislation, 2021). Compared to other sexual values, Korean adults generally tend to think negatively about extramarital intercourse. However, this suggests that gendered messages are stronger in Protestantism than in non-religious groups, even though they generally share negative views on extramarital intercourse. In particular, this suggests that the dual gendered message or socialization process that is more tolerant to men and stricter to women in terms of sexuality in the daily life of Protestant religious activities than in non-religious daily contexts may be more prominent.

Fifth, attitudes toward same-sex intercourse showed statistically significant interaction effects in gender and age groups. Older generations, generally, tended to show negative attitudes toward same-sex intercourse, but the significant gender difference existed among only 20s. Men revealed a more conservative attitude toward same-sex intercourse than women in their 20s. Moreover, the Protestants have more negative attitudes toward homosexuality compared

to the atheists. Religion influences the inner beliefs of individuals. Differences attributed to religious beliefs appear in culture, education, politics, and family values. These differences in values can lead to social conflict due to the lack of understanding of other religions and an exclusive attitude that is difficult to understand (Grim, 2012; Mahoney, 2005).

The results of this study have several implications. First, gendered social conflicts may occur in marital values on marital happiness and childbirth or sexual values about premarital intercourse or same-sex intercourse. Especially, gendered conflicts in sexual values would increase among younger generations under the age of 30 than older generations. Thus, it is necessary to take a deep look at gendered social messages, educational contexts, and online communications about marital and sexual values before adulthood. The reason women have a more progressive position than men towards these values is because they are in a position where they need to be more sensitive to change in marital and sexual life in their early stage of life (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Kaufman, 2005). However, since the reasons for gender differences in each area of family values may be different, follow-up studies are needed in this regard.

Second, social changes in family values keep occurring, and the generational conflicts on marital values have decreased. People in their 40s, who are Generation-X in South Korea (Bell, 2004; Park & Park, 2018), appear to be the generation where social changes in marital values are especially visible when comparing older generations. The conflict between adult children who do not want to marry and older parents who push their children to marry is expected to decrease in the younger generation under the age of 40. Marital values of younger generations under the 40s tend to have more openness than those of previous generations who adhered to traditional perspectives on marriage. However, increasing the low rate of marriage and childbirth in contemporary South Korean society may be difficult in this trend because the younger generation under the 40s would not think that marriage and childbirth guarantee happiness. This implication suggests that the approach to population policy and population education should change from an approach based on traditional marriage values to a direction that embraces a new paradigm that goes beyond the traditional relationship between marriage and childbirth.

Third, differences in religious context should not be overlooked as a major factor in the clash of values occurring in modern society. Research scholars need to study the religious context concerning marital and sexual value change or diversity. Since religious differences are particularly pronounced in the younger generation, campaigns, intervention, or education are needed to reduce social conflicts through an approach of inclusion and understanding rather than discrimination and exclusivity.

Despite these implications, this study has several limitations. First, the present study did not examine age effects, cohort effects, and period effects, respectively. Second, this study did not deal with the within-person changes of family values. Future studies are needed to explore these effects distinctively by using more advanced statistical models or repeated measured panel data. Third, additional factors construct family values even though this study only included gender, age group, and Protestantism contexts. Fourth, this study only focused on the Protestantism context in South Korea, but Buddhism or Roman Catholicism also have significance in contemporary South Korean society. Future studies must intently evaluate the various additional contexts that influence the formation of individual values.

This study is significant because it focused on identifying complex intersections of gendered, age group, and religious characteristics. Through this, we endeavored to understand when

values are shared, or conflict among genders, generations, and religious beliefs exist within contemporary South Korean society. This study is meaningful because it showed a macroscopic view of the flow of social change related to family values. Moreover, it simultaneously considers various contexts, unlike previous studies that have only evaluated fragmentary parts. The results of this study may provide useful basic information for understanding various values pursued by diverse social contexts and preparing a method for recognizing conflicting points caused by differing values.

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