College Students' Self-esteem, Physical Image, Awareness of Gender Equality, and Outlook on Marriage

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Abstract. The objectives of this descriptive survey study are to understand college students' self-esteem, physical image, awareness of gender equality, and outlook on marriage, and to explore the measures necessary to establish healthy outlooks on marriage for the future. The subjects were 356 college students. Self-esteem was found to be significantly related to household income (F = 3.48, P = 0.020) and academic achievement (F = 3.16, P = 0.040); physical image to academic achievement (F = 6.76, P < 0.001), personality traits (t = 3.56, P < 0.001), peer relationships (F = 11.95, P < 0.000), and opposite-sex friends (t = 3.19, P < 0.000); gender equality awareness to gender (t = −3.09, P = 0.002), college year level (F = 11.14, P < 0.000), household income (t = 3.62, P = 0.010), academic achievement (F = 2.98, P = 0.050), and high school type (F = 5.41, P < 0.001); and outlook on marriage to gender (t = −4.44, P < 0.000), college year level (F = 2.58, P = 0.050), peer relationships (F = 3.35, P = 0.030), and high school type (F = 5.30, P < 0.001). Self-esteem was found to be positively correlated with gender equality awareness (r = 0.141, P = 0.008).

Keywords: College students, Self-esteem, Physical image, Gender equality awareness, Outlook on marriage

1   Introduction

Marriage has multiple functions, forming a family as the basic unit of society and institutionally maintaining family and society [1]. While marriage is the most common way of forming a family, modern society provides a variety of situation-dependent paradigms due to the conceptual changes regarding marriage driven by the diversification of sociocultural backgrounds, developmental environments, and individual psychological demands [1].

Outlook on marriage is an expression of norms and values pursued by individuals in relation to marriage. It reflects various epochal and social situations and constantly evolves over time. This study aims to clarify the relationships

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between the variables that exert influence on college students' outlook on marriage with a view to exploring the measures for establishing a healthy outlook on marriage.

1.1 Objectives

This study aims to identify college students' self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage, and to analyze the degree of the variables according to the related characteristics and estimate their correlations.

2 Methods

2.1 Subjects and Data Collection

As the subjects of this study, 400 single college students (from freshmen to seniors) in K province were sampled from November 2 to 21, 2013, using convenience sampling, a non-probabilistic sampling method. The minimum necessary sample size was calculated at 161 with G*Power 3.1 Program reflecting the significance level (alpha) of 0.05, power of 80%, and effect size of 0.3. Taking into account a withdrawal rate of 30%, 400 students were sampled, of whom 356 (89%) were selected as study subjects. For data collection, the researcher visited the target university and gave oral and written explanations about the purpose and method of the study, guarantee of anonymity, voluntary participation, and refusal without penalty or loss, and collected informed consent forms to protect subjects' ethical aspects as much as possible.

2.2 Research Tools

2.2.1 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is subjectively assessed and defined as the degree of one's positive perception of oneself [2]. The tool measuring self-esteem was developed by Rosenberg [3] and translated by Jeon [4]. It has a total of 10 items on a 5-point scale; a higher score means higher self-esteem. In the study conducted by Jeon [4], the reliability of the tool was revealed by a Cronbach's alpha of .82, and the Cronbach's alpha for this study was also .82.

2.2.2. Physical Image

Physical image is a person's own mental image of his/her own physical body and signifies the feeling or attitude towards his/her own physical features [5]. The Korean adults' physical image tool was developed by Cha et al. (2006) and supplemented by Bae. It consists of 9 items on a 5-point scale, and a higher score means a more positive physical image. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study was .78.

2.2.3. Gender Equality Awareness

Gender equality awareness is the attitude towards gender without any fixed ideas about gender-specific capacities and attributes as well as gender roles and gender-related prejudices. It also means acknowledging the need for a system and policies to correct gender inequality in society [6]. The Korean Gender Egalitarianism Scale for Adolescents (KGES-A) was developed by the Korean Women's Development Institute. It consists of 20 items on a 6-point scale; a higher score means a higher degree of gender equality awareness. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study was .82.

2.2.4 Outlook on Marriage

Outlook on marriage is personally pursued norms and values regarding marriage and mate selection. It is influenced by personal convictions and values as well as various social norms [7]. The tool used was a questionnaire administered by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs and revised by Gang (2013). It consists of 7 items on a 6-point scale. A higher score means a more conservative attitude regarding the outlook on marriage. The Cronbach's alpha obtained in this study was .72.

2.3   Data Analysis

The data collected were statistically processed using the SAS statistical program. General characteristics were expressed by frequency and percentage, and the degrees of self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage were expressed as mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). The degrees of self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage according to related characteristics were analyzed using a t-test and an ANOVA. The post-hoc analysis was done using Scheffe's test, and the inter-variable correlations were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient.

3   Results

The M (±SD) of the subjects' self-esteem was 3.22 (±0.30), and those for physical image and gender equality awareness were 3.14 (±0.57) and 4.02 (±1.11), respectively. Those of the subscales family life, college life, and sociocultural life were 3.75 (±0.45), 3.80 (±0.28), and 4.00 (±0.52), respectively, and the outlook on marriage was estimated at 4.02 (±1.11).

The relationships of the variables according to their related characteristics are as follows. Self-esteem showed a statistically significant relationship to household income (F = 3.48, P = 0.020) and academic achievement (F = 3.16, P = 0.040). The post-hoc test confirmed inter-group differences. Physical image showed a statistically significant relationship to academic achievement (F = 6.76, P < 0.001), personality traits (t = 3.56, P < 0.001), peer relationships (F = 11.95, P < 0.000), and opposite-sex friends (t = 3.19, P < 0.000). The post-hoc test confirmed inter-group differences. Gender equality awareness showed a statistically significant relationship to gender (t = −3.09, P = 0.002), college year level (F = 11.14, P < 0.000), household income (t = 3.62, P = 0.010), academic achievement (F = 2.98, P = 0.050), and high school type (F = 5.41, P < 0.001). The post-hoc test confirmed inter-group differences. Outlook on marriage showed a statistically significant relationship to gender (t = −4.44, P < 0.000), college year level (F = 2.58, P = 0.050), peer relationships (F = 3.35, P = 0.030), and high school type (F = 5.30, P < 0.001). The post-hoc test confirmed inter-group differences [Table 1].

Self-esteem was found to be significantly correlated with gender equality awareness (r = 0.141, P = 0.008) [Table 2].

To conclude, college students' self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage are associated with a variety of factors, and a significant correlation was observed between self-esteem and gender equality awareness.

Table 1. Self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage according to related variables

Variable	Categories	Outlook on marriage M±SD	t or F (p) Scheffe	Self-esteem M±SD	t or F (p) Scheffe	Physical image M±SD	t or F (p) Scheffe	Gender equality awareness M±SD	t or F (p) Scheffe
Gender	Female	3.92±0.52 A	4.44 (<.0001) A>B	3.25±0.33	1.17 (0.241)	3.17±0.61	0.54 (0.592)	3.72±0.31 A	-3.09 (0.002 A<B)
	Male	3.67±0.4 B		3.21±0.29		3.13±0.54		3.83±0.26 B	
College year level	Freshman	3.8±0.5 A	2.58 (0.050) A>B	3.23±0.28	1.64 (0.180)	3.06±0.53	2.45 (0.060)	3.85±0.26 A	11.14 (<.000) A>B
	Sophomore	3.76±0.44 A		3.26±0.26		3.19±0.63		3.86±0.25 A	
	Junior	3.7±0.40 AB		3.17±0.36		3.24±0.58		3.68±0.31 B	
	Senior	3.53±0.23 B		3.2±0.36		3.2±0.41		3.65±0.2 B	

Household income (Unit: KRW)	< 2 million	3.74±0.46	1.83 (0.140)	3.14±0.26 A	3.48 (0.020) A<B	3.14±0.54	1.22 (0.300)	3.71±0.22 A	3.62 (0.010) A<B
	< 3 million	3.78±0.43		3.19±0.29 A		3.08±0.54		3.80±0.27 A	
	< 4 million	3.82±0.50		3.26±0.35 A		3.13±0.53		3.79±0.30 A	
	≥ 4 million	3.67±0.42		3.27±0.3 B		3.23±0.63		3.85±0.31 B	
Academic achievement	Above-average	3.78±0.48	0.3 (0.740)	3.19±0.37 B	3.16 (0.040) A>B	3.35±0.66 A	6.76 (0.001)	3.76±0.29 A	2.98 (0.050)
	Average	3.74±0.42		3.21±0.29 AB		3.13±0.5 B		3.82±0.26 A	
	Below-average	3.77±0.55		3.31±0.29 A		2.99±0.65 B		3.73±0.33 A	
Personality traits	Extrovert	3.74±0.45	-0.49 (0.630)	3.21±0.3	-0.96 (0.340)	3.24±0.6 A	3.56 (0.001) A>B	3.81±0.28	1.38 (0.170)
	Introvert	3.76±0.45		3.24±0.31		3.03±0.5 B		3.77±0.28	
Peer relationships	Many friends	3.79±0.46 A	3.35 (0.030) A<B	3.24±0.27	2.32 (0.090)	3.32±0.56 A	11.95 (<.000)	3.81±0.28	0.46 (0.630)
	Some friends	3.74±0.45 A		3.23±0.31		3.01±0.52 A		3.78±0.28	
	No friends	3.43±0.21 B		3.03±0.55		3.31±0.79 A		3.76±0.28	
Opposite-sex friends	Yes	3.77±0.44	0.63 (0.530)	3.23±0.33	0.24 (0.810)	3.26±0.57 A	3.19 (0.001)	3.81±0.28	0.71 (0.480)
	No	3.74±0.46		3.22±0.29		3.07±0.55 B		3.79±0.28	
High school type	Girls only	3.63±0.38 B	5.30 (0.001) A>B	3.2±0.27	0.62 (0.600)	3.08±0.56	1.1 (0.340)	3.86±0.27 A	5.41 (0.001) A>B
	Boys only	3.90±0.50 A		3.27±0.36		3.24±0.73		3.7±0.34 B	
	Co-ed (mixed)	3.79±0.48 A		3.23±0.31		3.16±0.54		3.8±0.27 AB	
	Co-ed (sex-segregated)	3.76±0.41 AB		3.22±0.29		3.16±0.43		3.72±0.23 B	

Table 2. Correlations among self-esteem, physical image, gender equality awareness, and outlook on marriage

Categories	Outlook on marriage	Self-esteem	Physical image	Gender equality awareness
	r(p)	r(p)	r(p)	r(p)
Outlook on marriage	1			
Self-esteem	0.048(0.363)	1		
Physical image	-0.066(0.211)	-0.072(0.174)	1	
Gender equality awareness	-0.037(0.483)	0.141(0.008)	-0.068(0.199)	1

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