

Original Article

# The Impact of Couples' Gender Roles, Self-esteem, and Marital Relationships on Psychological Well-being

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** This study is to analyze the impact of couples' awareness of gender roles, self-esteem, and marital relationships on psychological well-being. An online survey was conducted for 1,200 adult couples nationwide. **Methods:** SPSS was used to perform descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, independent t-test, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis. **Results:** The study reported that awareness of gender roles was high in women and emerging adulthood, while self-esteem was high in men, but significantly low in old age. In marital relationships, there are differences depending on gender and life cycle. As age increased, emotional exchanges, which are intimate communication between couples, increased, but expression of affection and leisure sharing decreased. The results of the significance test of the regression coefficient for positive psychological well-being showed that education level, marriage duration, income quintile, self-esteem, expression of affection, and leisure sharing had an effect. Positive psychological well-being increased with higher education level, longer marriage duration, higher income quintile, greater self-esteem, more expression of affection, and more leisure sharing. The results of the significance test of the regression coefficient for negative psychological well-being showed that income quintile, awareness of gender roles, self-esteem, intimate communication, and expression of affection had an impact. Negative psychological well-being decreased with higher income quintile, better awareness of gender roles, greater self-esteem, more intimate communication, and more expression of affection. **Conclusions:** It is suggested that a systematic couple education program including awareness of gender roles, enhancement of self-esteem, intimate communication and expression of affection, and leisure sharing methods that can increase positive psychological well-being for couples with low education, short duration of marriage, and low income quintile should be developed to improve the quality of couple relationships. In addition, awareness of gender role may have an indirect effect although it did not have a direct effect. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze structural relationships more precisely in follow-up studies. This study is expected to contribute to providing basic data for the development of counseling and education programs to improve marital relationships.

**Keywords:** Gender Roles of Couples, Marital Relationship, Marital Satisfaction, Psychological Well-being, Self-esteem

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## 1. Introduction

As the elderly population increases and the number of years of marriage increases due to the extension of average

life expectancy, social interest in married life of couples is increasing. However, the increase in nuclear families is weakening the awareness of support for the elderly, and the number of elderly households where only couples

live is rapidly increasing after their children's leaving home and retirement due to the elderly's desire for independent living, and the increase in divorce after middle age is emerging as a social problem[1].

According to the 2020 Korean Social Trends Report[2], the number of divorces in which the marriage lasted more than 20 years was 38,446, which accounted for 34.7% of all divorces, indicating that one out of three divorced couples is a divorce in their twilight years. The improvement of women's economic ability, changes in the social atmosphere, and increases in average life expectancy were investigated as causes of the surge in divorces in their twilight years. In the past, many women endured unhappy marriages because they did not have the economic conditions to live alone and divorce was considered shameful. However, the traditional idea that families should be maintained has weakened and a social trend has formed in which divorce is considered a personal choice in recent years. This can be seen as the result of changes in social awareness of divorce and lower psychological barriers to divorce.

Understanding gender roles according to changing times and practicing them, self-esteem and others affect successful marital relationships.

Gender role attitude refers to the subjective degree of support for gender separation of roles in the home[3], and can be defined as an individual's attitude toward traditional gender stereotypes or the roles and characteristics of women or men[4]. While the traditional attitude was a dichotomous attitude that strictly separated the roles of women and men in gender role attitude, the modern attitude represents an attitude that seeks flexibility in the content of gender roles[1].

Wives had lower gender role attitudes, awareness of close communication, and marital satisfaction than their husbands, and low marital satisfaction due to lack of division of roles or positive communication in married life may be a cause of divorce in old age. Therefore, men in old age should try to understand their wives' feelings and listen to their stories, and solve problems between the couple through division of roles at home. In addition, women can improve the quality of their married life by communicating with their husbands in a proactive manner rather than a passive or exclusive one[5].

The results of analyzing the influence relationship between the couple's gender role attitude and communication showed that a higher level of awareness of gender roles and sexual ability led to closer communication between couples. This suggests that it is effective in improving communication between elderly couples when the roles of the husband and wife in the family are clear,

and the husband is responsible for the household economy and the wife is responsible for the housework[6].

Marital relationships are closely related to an individual's self-esteem, which has a significant impact on marital satisfaction. According to a study by Kim and Ha (2020)[7], a spouse with high self-esteem positively evaluates their own values and abilities, which is also reflected in the way the couple interacts. In particular, couples with high self-esteem tend to have strong trust in each other and resolve conflicts more positively. On the other hand, a spouse with low self-esteem is more likely to overreact to the other person's reactions or communicates negatively, which may lower the quality of the marital relationship. These research results suggest that self-esteem is a key factor in determining marital interaction and marital satisfaction[7].

Couples' gender role attitude is a factor that affects marital relationships and psychological well-being as well as self-esteem. A study by Hu others (2021)[8] reported that conflicts between couples with traditional awareness of gender roles are increasing, which is likely to lead to lower marital satisfaction and psychological well-being. On the other hand, couples with flexible attitudes toward gender roles respect each other's roles, share housework and financial burdens, and form positive self-concepts in the process. In addition, communication between couples with equal gender role attitude is smooth, which contributes to increased psychological stability and satisfaction. These research results emphasize that gender role attitudes are not limited to simply dividing roles in the home, but affect individuals' psychological health and overall marital relationships[8].

Most of the existing papers on couples' gender roles, self-esteem, marital relationships, marital satisfaction, and psychological well-being are limited to adolescence[3] and old age [1][5].

Therefore, this paper aims to analyze the differences in self-esteem based on couples' gender roles in each life cycle and the impact on psychological well-being that may affect the marital relationship, figure out factors that can sustain successful marital relationships in each life cycle, and use the result as basic data for developing an educational program for successful married life for each generation.

## 2. Research method

### 2.1. Research subjects and methods

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethics regulations after obtaining approval from the Institutional

Review Board on campus (KYU-2024-10-017-001). A total of 1,200 married men and women registered with a survey company participated in the survey of this study. The samples were allocated proportionally by region, gender, and age. The purpose of the study was explained online to the research subjects, and prior consent was obtained, and then a self-reporting online survey was conducted based on empirical experience in the survey methodology to minimize bias and distortion toward specific classes.

## 2.2. Research tools

In order to measure the sub-variables related to gender role attitudes, this study reconstructed awareness of gender roles into a total of 5 items based on the scale developed by Kim and Ha (2020)[7], and each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The response categories were composed of an interval scale from 'Absolutely yes (5 points)' to 'Absolutely no (1 point)', and a higher score indicates a higher gender role attitude. In this study, the confidence level Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.710$ .

The self-esteem scale is a self-esteem scale developed by Rosenberg (1979)[9], and consists of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The response categories were composed of an interval scale from 'Absolutely yes (5 points)' to 'Absolutely no (1 point)', and a higher score indicates higher self-esteem. In this study, the confidence level Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.870$ .

In order to measure the sub-variables related to marital relationships, a total of 23 items on intimacy, communication, expression of affection, and leisure sharing were reconstructed based on the study of Cho and Choi (2011) [10], and each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The response categories were composed of an interval scale from 'Absolutely yes (5 points)' to 'Absolutely no (1 point)', In this study, the confidence level Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.952$ .

Based on the study that divided psychological well-being into the opposing concepts of positive and negative emotions, the psychological well-being was reconstructed into a total of 14 items of positive and negative well-being by referring to the study of Cho and Choi (2011)[10]. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted for each item. In this study, the confidence level Cronbach's  $\alpha=0.691$ .

## 2.3. Analysis method

In this study, the SPSS Statistics 25 program was used to analyze the impact of the couple's gender roles, self-esteem, and marital relationship on the psychological well-being of adult couples. The frequency and percentage

were calculated to analyze the general characteristics of the subjects, and the mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the couple's gender roles and self-esteem. In addition, independent t-test and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the differences in psychological well-being of adult couples' gender roles, self-esteem, and marital relationships based on general characteristics of the subjects.

In order to analyze the differences in psychological well-being based on the subjects' age, occupation, education level, standard of living, health status of the subjects and their spouses, and duration of marriage, one-way ANOVA was used for analysis, and the Duncan test was used as a post-hoc test for the comparison analysis. In addition, multiple regression analysis was conducted to figure out factors that affect positive and negative psychological well-being.

## 3. Research result

### 3.1. General characteristics of the research subjects

The results of comparing the general characteristics of the research subjects by gender showed that the proportion of manhood (50-64 years old) was the highest in women (47.3%) than in men ( $p<0.05$ ), and the proportion of college graduates (4-year universities or less) was higher in men (69.8%) ( $p<0.001$ ), and the proportion of full-time workers was higher in men (67.2%), but the proportion of unemployed was higher in women (43.0%) ( $p<0.001$ ). There was a significant difference in the duration of marriage between genders ( $p<0.05$ ), and the proportion of men who had been married for less than 10 to 20 years was higher than that of women. There was also a difference in religion by gender ( $p<0.05$ ), and the proportion of men who did not have a religion was higher, while a significant difference was observed in the average conversation time between couples ( $p<0.05$ ), and the proportion of women who did not have a conversation was higher (47.2%) than men (45.0%).

These results reflect differences in social roles and economic factors by gender, and suggest the need for communication during married life, which should be considered as a sociocultural factor for a smooth married life when developing educational programs in the future.

### 3.2. Awareness of gender roles and self-esteem

The result of comparing the gender role awareness of the research subjects by gender, women (3.25 points) tended to have stronger awareness of gender roles than men

**Table 1. General characteristics of the research subjects**

Characteristics	Gender		Total	p
	Male	Female		
unit : N(%)				
Age group				
Emerging adulthood(19~29 years old)	19 (3.2)	19 (3.2)	38 (3.2)	<.05
Middle age(30-49 years old)	255 (42.5)	255 (42.5)	510 (42.5)	
Manhood(50-64 years old)	254 (42.3)	284 (47.3)	538 (44.8)	
Old age (65 years and older)	72 (12.0)	42 (7.0)	114 (9.5)	
Education level				
High school graduate or lower	84 (14.0)	165 (27.5)	249 (20.8)	<.001
College (4-year or lower) graduate	419 (69.8)	366 (61.0)	785 (65.4)	
Graduate school (master, Ph. D) graduate	97 (16.2)	69 (11.5)	166 (13.8)	
Employment status				
Full-time	403 (67.2)	195 (32.5)	598 (49.8)	<.001
Non-regular	73 (12.2)	100 (16.7)	173 (14.4)	
Self-employed	73 (12.2)	45 (7.5)	118 (9.8)	
Studying	2 (0.3)	2 (0.3)	4 (0.3)	
Unemployed	49 (8.2)	258 (43.0)	307 (25.6)	
Duration of marriage				
Less than 10	135 (22.5)	133 (22.2)	268 (22.3)	<.05
10-20 years	162 (27.0)	148 (24.7)	310 (25.8)	
20-30 years	148 (24.7)	117 (19.5)	265 (22.1)	
30-40 years	123 (20.5)	161 (26.8)	284 (23.7)	
40-50 years	32 (5.3)	41 (6.8)	73 (6.1)	
Religion				
No	320 (53.3)	287 (47.8)	607 (50.6)	<.05
Yes	280 (46.7)	313 (52.2)	593 (49.4)	
Number of children				
None	64 (10.7)	64 (10.7)	128 (10.7)	.740
1	169 (28.2)	165 (27.5)	334 (27.8)	
2	316 (52.7)	315 (52.5)	631 (52.6)	
3	46 (7.7)	54 (9.0)	100 (8.3)	
4	5 (0.8)	2 (0.3)	7 (0.6)	
Average conversation time between couples (minutes)				
No conversation	270 (45.0)	283 (47.2)	553 (46.1)	<.05
15 minutes or less	57 (9.5)	70 (11.7)	127 (10.6)	
16-30 minutes	253 (42.2)	212 (35.3)	465 (38.8)	
31 minutes or more	20 (3.3)	35 (5.8)	55 (4.6)	
Monthly average household income (unit: ten thousand won)				
1 million won or less	3 (0.5)	4 (0.7)	7 (0.6)	.099
1 million to 400,000 won	125 (20.8)	156 (26.0)	281 (23.4)	
4 million to 7 million won	313 (52.2)	278 (46.3)	591 (49.3)	
7 million to 10 million won	107 (17.8)	121 (20.2)	228 (19.0)	
10 million won or more	52 (8.7)	41 (6.8)	93 (7.8)	
Total	600 (50.0)	600 (50.0)	1200 (100.0)	

p-value calculated by Chi-Squared test.

(3.09 points) ( $p < .001$ ). In the items, 'If a woman works full-time, the family's daily life becomes difficult ( $p < .001$ )' and 'If the mother of a preschooler works, it is bad for the preschooler ( $p < .05$ )', men had higher awareness of gender roles. In the items, 'Working as a housewife is as important as earning money outside ( $p < .001$ )' and 'A man's duty is to earn money outside, while a woman's duty is to take care of the home and family ( $p < .05$ )', women had significantly higher awareness of gender roles.

The result of comparing awareness of gender roles by

life cycle showed that awareness of gender roles was significantly higher in emerging adulthood in items of 'If a woman works full-time, the family's daily life becomes difficult ( $p < .05$ )', 'If the mother of a preschooler works, it is bad for the preschooler ( $p < .001$ )', and 'A man's duty is to earn money outside, while a woman's duty is to take care of the home and family ( $p < .05$ )'.

In self-esteem, significant differences between genders were identified in some items. Men had significantly higher self-esteem in the items "I don't have much to brag about,"

"I have a positive attitude toward myself," "I am generally satisfied with myself," and "Sometimes I feel like I'm a worthless person" ( $p < .05$ ).

In comparison of self-esteem by life cycle, the old age group tended to have relatively lower self-esteem than other age groups. The self-esteem of the old age group was significantly lower in the items, 'I feel that I am generally a failure ( $p < .05$ )', 'I have a positive attitude toward myself ( $p < .001$ )', 'Sometimes I feel like I'm a worthless person ( $p < .05$ )', and 'Sometimes I think I am not a good person ( $p < .001$ )'.

These results suggest that awareness of gender roles and self-esteem are formed differently depending on gender and age, and emphasize the need for gender equality education and psychological support for each age group.

### 3.3. Marital relationship

The results of analyzing gender differences by dividing marital relationships into three sub-factors of intimate communication, expression of affection, and leisure sharing are as follows: In intimate communication, expression of affection, and leisure sharing, men showed higher scores on average than women ( $p < .001$ ). In particular, men showed more positive responses than women in items such as 'We are fully considerate of each other ( $p < .001$ )', 'We tend to talk honestly to each other ( $p < .05$ )', 'We make various efforts to express our affection to each other ( $p < .001$ )', and 'We make efforts to make the other person feel love and happiness when they are sad ( $p < .001$ )'.

In the analysis by life cycle, significant differences were found in all of intimate communication, expression of affection, and leisure sharing ( $p < .001$ ). In the case of intimate communication, the scores were higher in emerging adulthood and old age than in manhood ( $p < .001$ ), while expression of affection and leisure sharing were the highest in emerging adulthood. In particular, there was a significant difference in the scores of emerging adulthood compared to manhood ( $p < .001$ ) in items such as "We make efforts to make the other person feel love and happiness when they are sad ( $p < .05$ )" and "We like to eat out together ( $p < .001$ )".

These results suggest that there are differences in marital relationships based on gender and life cycle, and that as age increases, emotional exchanges, which are intimate communication between couples, increase, but expressions of affection and leisure sharing tend to decrease.

### 3.4. Psychological well-being

The results of analyzing the differences by gender and life cycle by dividing psychological well-being into positive

and negative well-being are as follows: There was a significant difference in positive well-being ( $p < .001$ ), and men showed higher scores than women. In particular, men showed more positive responses than women in items such as 'I feel that life is fun ( $p < .001$ )', 'I am satisfied with my life ( $p < .001$ )', and 'I am enjoying my life ( $p < .001$ )'.

In the analysis by life cycle, there was a significant difference in positive well-being ( $p < .05$ ). In particular, old age showed higher scores than middle age and manhood in the items 'I feel fulfilled in life ( $p < .05$ )' and 'I feel at ease ( $p < .05$ )'. In the item 'I am enjoying my life ( $p < .001$ )', emerging adulthood showed higher scores than middle age and manhood. These results suggest that the reward of life and peace of mind in the old age increase positive well-being.

In the case of negative well-being, there was no significant difference in the average score. However, women showed higher scores in the items "I don't feel like doing anything these days" ( $p < .001$ ) and "These days I've been having trouble sleeping ( $p < .05$ )." Differences by life cycle were found in items such as "I don't feel like doing anything these days," "I have no idea what to do," and "I feel quite depressed" ( $p < .05$ ). In particular, relatively low scores were shown in the old age, which showed that the old age group tends to experience less negative emotions than the middle age and manhood groups.

These results suggest that positive well-being tends to increase and negative emotions tend to decrease with age.

### 3.5. Correlation analysis of couples' awareness of sexual life, self-esteem, marital relationship, and psychological well-being

Awareness of gender roles showed a significant positive correlation with all sub-factors of marital relationship (intimate communication, expression of affection, leisure sharing) ( $p < .001$ ). Self-esteem was positively correlated with intimate communication ( $r = .059$ ,  $p < .05$ ), expression of affection ( $r = .102$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and leisure sharing ( $r = .077$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, positive well-being showed a positive correlation with marital relationship factors ( $r = .378 \sim .440$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while negative well-being showed a negative correlation ( $r = -.288 \sim -.330$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that open awareness of gender roles and high self-esteem improve the quality of marital relationship, which is closely related to psychological well-being. A healthy marital relationship tends to increase positive well-being and decrease negative well-being. Therefore, in order to form a healthy marital relationship, it is necessary to make efforts to alleviate traditional gender role stereotypes and increase self-esteem.

Table 2. Awareness of gender roles and self-esteem

Item	Gender		Life cycle				p	Duncan
	Male n=600	Female n=600	Emerging adulthood (19-29 years old) <sup>a</sup> n=510		Middle age (30-49 years old) <sup>b</sup> n=114			
			Manhood (50-64 years old) <sup>c</sup> n=538	Old age (65 years and older) <sup>d</sup> n=114				
Awareness of gender roles								
*1. If a woman works full-time, the family's daily life becomes difficult.	3.19 ± 1.041	2.71 ± 1.053	3.34 ± 1.258	3.03 ± 1.146	2.87 ± .998	2.80 ± .970	<.05	bcd<a
*2. If the mother of a preschooler works, it is bad for the preschooler.	3.01 ± 1.093	2.89 ± 1.071	3.53 ± 1.084	3.06 ± 1.159	2.84 ± 1.004	2.79 ± .991	<.001	bcd<a
3. Working as a housewife is as important as earning money outside.	3.63 ± 1.045	3.94 ± .859	3.66 ± .966	3.72 ± 1.061	3.84 ± .882	3.82 ± .918	.186	
*4. A man's duty is to earn money outside, while a woman's duty is to take care of the home and family.	3.43 ± 1.041	3.60 ± 1.081	3.66 ± 1.300	3.65 ± 1.101	3.42 ± 1.011	3.32 ± .989	<.05	d<ab
5. Both men and women should contribute to household income.	3.46 ± .887	3.50 ± .821	3.71 ± .898	3.49 ± .910	3.47 ± .800	3.39 ± .827	.265	
Total	3.09 ± .596	3.25 ± .570	3.58 ± .678	3.39 ± .557	3.29 ± .493	3.22 ± .504	<.001	d<bc<a
Self-esteem								
6. I think I am a worthy person like others.	3.75 ± .799	3.72 ± .823	3.79 ± 1.018	3.71 ± .870	3.75 ± .750	3.74 ± .741	.869	
7. I think I have a good personality.	3.69 ± .836	3.63 ± .823	3.55 ± 1.132	3.65 ± .868	3.67 ± .786	3.67 ± .749	.874	
*8. I feel that I am generally a failure.	3.67 ± 1.044	3.70 ± 1.007	3.45 ± 1.132	3.64 ± 1.076	3.69 ± .994	3.96 ± .841	<.05	ab<d
9. I can work well like most other people.	3.79 ± .761	3.71 ± .824	3.55 ± .978	3.73 ± .838	3.76 ± .752	3.85 ± .707	.210	
*10. I don't have much to brag about.	3.30 ± .993	3.19 ± .934	3.13 ± 1.119	3.21 ± 1.010	3.24 ± .919	3.39 ± .918	.286	
11. I have a positive attitude toward myself.	3.68 ± .841	3.55 ± .860	3.71 ± 1.037	3.49 ± .914	3.68 ± .787	3.79 ± .722	<.001	c<d
12. I am generally satisfied with myself.	3.56 ± .888	3.40 ± .910	3.53 ± 1.059	3.43 ± .939	3.49 ± .857	3.60 ± .880	.320	
*13. I wish I could respect myself more.	2.52 ± .847	2.47 ± .823	2.71 ± 1.088	2.47 ± .879	2.53 ± .784	2.38 ± .757	.093	
*14. Sometimes I feel like I'm a worthless person.	3.68 ± 1.081	3.55 ± 1.112	3.47 ± 1.084	3.50 ± 1.155	3.66 ± 1.040	3.94 ± 1.033	<.05	ab<d
*15. Sometimes I think I am not a good person.	3.62 ± 1.054	3.53 ± 1.082	3.00 ± 1.013	3.36 ± 1.111	3.75 ± .995	3.90 ± .977	<.001	a<b<cd
Total	3.17 ± .329	3.16 ± .307	3.24 ± .467	3.18 ± .339	3.15 ± .297	3.11 ± .238	<.05	d<a

\*: Items 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 13, 14, and 15 were inverted for calculation.  
 p-value calculated by independent t-test or one way ANOVA (scale1-5) 1: Absolutely no, 1: No, 3: Average, 4: Yes, 5: Absolutely yes

**Table 3. Marital relationship**

unit : mean±SD

Item	Gender		p	Life cycle				p	Duncan	
	Male n=600	Female n=600		Emerging adulthood (19-29 years old) <sup>a</sup> n=38	Middle age (30-49 years old) <sup>b</sup> n=510	Manhood (50-64 years old) <sup>c</sup> n=538	Old age (65 years and older) <sup>d</sup> n=114			
Intimate communication	1. We are each other's mental support.	4.19 ± .828	4.03 ± .899	<.05	4.18 ± 1.010	4.10 ± .877	4.06 ± .880	4.34 ± .663	<.05	c<d
	2. We are fully considerate of each other.	4.09 ± .823	3.87 ± .842	<.001	3.95 ± .899	4.04 ± .831	3.89 ± .850	4.16 ± .759	<.05	c<d
	3. We tend to consult each other before making a decision.	4.09 ± .837	4.03 ± .841	.242	4.21 ± .905	4.10 ± .829	3.98 ± .857	4.21 ± .734	<.05	c<ad
	4. We tend to care about each other even for small things.	3.95 ± .797	3.85 ± .889	<.05	4.16 ± .886	3.96 ± .838	3.78 ± .850	4.11 ± .768	<.001	c<ad
	5. We are very close to each other.	4.08 ± .839	3.97 ± .876	<.05	4.34 ± .847	4.12 ± .837	3.89 ± .879	4.17 ± .763	<.001	c<ad
	6. We understand each other's thoughts and opinions clearly.	3.83 ± .874	3.68 ± .867	<.05	3.79 ± .875	3.82 ± .901	3.65 ± .864	3.96 ± .728	<.05	c<d
	7. We tend to talk honestly to each other.	3.91 ± .862	3.77 ± .893	<.05	3.97 ± .944	3.89 ± .893	3.73 ± .877	4.05 ± .751	<.05	c<d
Expression of affection	Subtotal	4.02 ± .688	3.89 ± .734	<.05	4.09 ± .738	4.00 ± .718	3.85 ± .715	4.14 ± .618	<.001	c<ad
	8. We tend to express our affection honestly to each other.	3.67 ± .973	3.46 ± 1.031	<.001	4.13 ± 1.044	3.73 ± .993	3.36 ± .999	3.61 ± .889	<.001	c<bd<a
	9. We make various efforts to express our affection to each other.	3.63 ± .965	3.23 ± 1.018	<.001	4.00 ± .959	3.58 ± 1.017	3.23 ± .979	3.53 ± .961	<.001	c<bd<a
Leisure sharing	10. We are sexually satisfied with each other.	3.32 ± 1.070	3.18 ± 1.033	<.05	3.76 ± 1.076	3.27 ± 1.125	3.16 ± 1.012	3.41 ± .829	<.05	cbd<a
	11. We make efforts to make the other person feel love and happiness when they are sad.	3.92 ± .820	3.66 ± .969	<.001	4.24 ± .820	3.83 ± .938	3.71 ± .894	3.89 ± .796	<.05	cbd<a
	Subtotal	3.66 ± .813	3.44 ± .896	<.001	4.03 ± .841	3.60 ± .881	3.36 ± .845	3.61 ± .754	<.001	cbd<a
Leisure sharing	12. We get what we want from each other while spending our free time together.	3.70 ± .951	3.54 ± .997	<.05	3.74 ± 1.057	3.75 ± .935	3.46 ± .997	3.70 ± .940	<.001	c<b
	13. We like to eat out together.	3.99 ± .887	3.86 ± .957	<.05	4.29 ± 1.037	4.06 ± .877	3.77 ± .940	3.91 ± .908	<.001	c<bd<a
	14. We tend to spend weekends together.	3.99 ± .978	3.94 ± 1.012	.400	4.08 ± .997	4.16 ± .938	3.76 ± 1.031	4.03 ± .887	<.001	c<abd
	15. We like to travel together.	4.00 ± .948	3.87 ± 1.021	<.05	4.21 ± .905	4.11 ± .916	3.73 ± 1.028	3.99 ± .945	<.001	c<ab
Subtotal	16. There are many fun things we can do together in our daily lives.	3.56 ± .946	3.38 ± 1.048	<.05	3.97 ± 1.052	3.69 ± .995	3.22 ± .967	3.49 ± .895	<.001	c<b<a
	Subtotal	3.87 ± .765	3.73 ± .851	<.001	4.06 ± .783	3.95 ± .766	3.59 ± .826	3.82 ± .751	<.001	c<b<a

p-value calculated by independent t-test or one way ANOVA (scale 1-5) 1: Absolutely no, 1: No, 3: Average, 4: Yes, 5: Absolutely yes

**Table 4. Psychological well-being**

Item	Gender		p	Life cycle				p	Duncan
	p			p					
	Male n=600	Female n=600		Emerging adulthood (19-29 years old) <sup>a</sup> n=38	Middle age (30-49 years old) <sup>b</sup> n=510	Manhood (50-64 years old) <sup>c</sup> n=538	Old age (65 years and older) <sup>d</sup> n=114		
Positive well-being									
1. I feel that life is fun.	3.44 ± .882	3.24 ± .911	<.001	3.53 ± .893	3.32 ± .955	3.31 ± .860	3.49 ± .833	.126	
2. I am satisfied with my life.	3.37 ± .935	3.18 ± .934	<.001	3.34 ± .938	3.27 ± .969	3.24 ± .929	3.45 ± .842	.197	
3. I have something that is especially fun and interesting.	3.28 ± .930	3.09 ± .964	<.05	3.18 ± .834	3.15 ± 1.009	3.18 ± .916	3.39 ± .867	.120	
4. I feel fulfilled in life.	3.43 ± .874	3.30 ± .881	<.05	3.55 ± .828	3.33 ± .928	3.34 ± .851	3.58 ± .775	<.05 bc<d	
5. I am enjoying my life.	3.33 ± .966	3.11 ± .946	<.001	3.55 ± .891	3.20 ± .995	3.17 ± .942	3.42 ± .891	<.05 bc<a	
6. Things tend to go as planned.	3.13 ± .941	3.07 ± .927	.253	3.34 ± .938	3.09 ± .957	3.07 ± .924	3.24 ± .865	.127	
7. I feel at ease.	3.38 ± .915	3.24 ± .969	<.05	3.42 ± .889	3.22 ± .969	3.32 ± .914	3.60 ± .938	<.05 bc<d	
Subtotal	3.34 ± .774	3.17 ± .798	<.001	3.42 ± .674	3.22 ± .811	3.23 ± .783	3.45 ± .736	<.05 bc<d	
Negative well-being									
8. I feel a lot more lonely these days.	2.45 ± 1.071	2.53 ± 1.073	.187	2.45 ± 1.058	2.48 ± 1.096	2.55 ± 1.060	2.29 ± 1.011	.123	
9. I don't feel like doing anything these days.	2.46 ± 1.138	2.73 ± 1.122	<.001	2.68 ± 1.233	2.71 ± 1.198	2.54 ± 1.073	2.34 ± 1.071	<.05 d<ab	
10. I feel like people hate me.	2.15 ± .983	2.10 ± .957	.372	2.39 ± 1.175	2.16 ± 1.031	2.10 ± .900	1.97 ± .917	.077	
11. I have no idea what to do.	2.27 ± 1.061	2.35 ± 1.047	.189	2.42 ± 1.222	2.39 ± 1.113	2.28 ± .994	2.08 ± .970	<.05 d<ab	
12. I feel quite depressed.	2.21 ± 1.075	2.33 ± 1.110	.054	2.34 ± 1.400	2.30 ± 1.124	2.29 ± 1.052	1.97 ± 1.000	<.05 d<abc	
13. These days I've been talking less than usual.	2.43 ± 1.068	2.40 ± 1.070	.608	2.53 ± 1.350	2.39 ± 1.135	2.47 ± 1.005	2.24 ± .934	.139	
14. These days I've been having trouble sleeping.	2.43 ± 1.135	2.60 ± 1.132	<.05	2.53 ± 1.310	2.48 ± 1.195	2.57 ± 1.048	2.40 ± 1.203	.408	
Subtotal	2.34 ± .893	2.43 ± .863	.074	2.48 ± 1.046	2.42 ± .917	2.40 ± .830	2.19 ± .853	.070	

p-value calculated by independent t-test or one way ANOVA

(scale1-5) 1: Absolutely no, 1: No, 3: Average, 4: Yes, 5: Absolutely yes

### 3.6. Multiple regression analysis of positive psychological well-being

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to figure out factors affecting the subjects' positive psychological well-being. As a result, the regression model was statistically significant ( $F=48.518$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 49.6% ( $R^2=0.246$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.241$ ). On the other hand, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.042, which was generally close to 2, indicating that there was no problem with the independence of the residuals, and the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were all 10 or less, indicating that there was no problem with multicollinearity.

The results of the significance test of the regression coefficients for positive psychological well-being showed that education level, duration of marriage, income quintile, self-esteem, expression of affection, and leisure sharing had an effect. Positive psychological well-being increased with higher education level, longer duration of marriage, higher income quintile, greater self-esteem, more expression of affection, and more leisure sharing.

### 3.7. Multiple regression analysis of negative psychological well-being

In order to figure out factors affecting the negative psychological well-being of the subjects, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. As a result, the regression model was statistically significant ( $F=33.588$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and the explanatory power of the regression model was approximately 46.9% ( $R^2 = 0.220$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.214$ ). On the other hand, the Durbin-Watson statistic was 2.026, which is generally close to 2, indicating that there was no problem with the independence of the residuals. In addition, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were all 10 or less, indicating that there was no problem with multicollinearity.

The results of the significance test of the regression coefficients for negative psychological well-being showed that income quintile, awareness of gender roles, self-esteem, intimate communication, and expression of affection had an effect. Negative psychological well-being decreased with higher income quintile, better awareness of gender roles, higher self-esteem, better intimate communication, and more expression of affection.

**Table 5. Correlation analysis of couples' awareness of sexual life, self-esteem, marital relationship, and psychological well-being**

		Awareness of gender roles	Self-esteem	Marital relationship			Psychological well-being		
				Intimate communication	Expression of affection	Leisure sharing	Positive well-being	Negative well-being	
Awareness of gender roles	Pearson correlation coefficient	1	-.053	.185**	.154**	.184**	.120**	-.246**	
	Significance probability (both sides)		.066	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
Self-esteem	Pearson correlation coefficient	-.053	1	.059*	.102**	.077**	.152**	.211**	
	Significance probability (both sides)	.066		<.05	<.001	<.05	<.001	<.001	
Marital relationship	Intimate communication	Pearson correlation coefficient	.185**	.059*	1	.756**	.752**	.397**	-.330**
		Significance probability (both sides)	<.001	<.05		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	Expression of affection	Pearson correlation coefficient	.154**	.102**	.756**	1	.697**	.440**	-.289**
		Significance probability (both sides)	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	Leisure sharing	Pearson correlation coefficient	.184**	.077**	.752**	.697**	1	.378**	-.288**
		Significance probability (both sides)	<.001	<.05	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
Psychological well-being	Positive well-being	Pearson correlation coefficient	.120**	.152**	.397**	.440**	.378**	1	-.543**
		Significance probability (both sides)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
	Negative well-being	Pearson correlation coefficient	-.246**	.211**	-.330**	-.289**	-.288**	-.543**	1
		Significance probability (both sides)	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

p-value calculated by Pearson correlation Analysis.

**Table 6. Multiple regression analysis of positive psychological well-being**

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p	Collinearity statistic		
	B	Standard error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	-.177	.298		-.594	.552			
<b>Age</b>	-.005	.004	-.075	-1.403	.161	.216	4.629	
<b>Education level</b>	.212	.035	.157	6.018	<.001	.899	1.113	
<b>Duration of marriage</b>	.144	.034	.224	4.243	<.001	.218	4.591	
<b>Average daily conversation time</b>	.012	.012	.026	.976	.329	.836	1.196	
<b>Income quintile</b>	.073	.023	.080	3.101	<.05	.926	1.080	
<b>Awareness of gender roles</b>	.071	.038	.048	1.861	.063	.930	1.075	
<b>Self-esteem</b>	.270	.062	.109	4.342	<.001	.973	1.028	
<b>Marital relationship</b>	Intimate communication	.083	.048	.075	1.715	.087	.319	3.134
	Expression of affection	.250	.037	.274	6.812	<.001	.377	2.650
	Leisure sharing	.099	.039	.101	2.503	<.05	.372	2.686

F = 45.236, p=0.000, R<sup>2</sup> = .276, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = .270, Durbin-Watson = 2.046

p-value calculated by Multiple Regression Analysis

**Table 7. Multiple regression analysis of negative psychological well-being**

	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p	Collinearity statistic		
	B	Standard error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF	
(Constant)	3.466	.344		10.067	<.001			
<b>Age</b>	-.001	.004	-.009	-.162	.871	.216	4.629	
<b>Education level</b>	-.058	.041	-.039	-1.436	.151	.899	1.113	
<b>Duration of marriage</b>	-.073	.039	-.101	-1.849	.065	.218	4.591	
<b>Average daily conversation time</b>	-.011	.014	-.023	-.834	.404	.836	1.196	
<b>Income quintile</b>	-.090	.027	-.088	-3.319	<.05	.926	1.080	
<b>Awareness of gender roles</b>	-.290	.044	-.176	-6.621	<.001	.930	1.075	
<b>Self-esteem</b>	.632	.072	.229	8.804	<.001	.973	1.028	
<b>Marital relationship</b>	Intimate communication	-.199	.056	-.162	-3.568	<.001	.319	3.134
	Expression of affection	-.105	.042	-.104	-2.483	<.05	.377	2.650
	Leisure sharing	-.082	.045	-.076	-1.814	.070	.372	2.686

F = 33.588, p=0.000, R<sup>2</sup> =.220, Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> =.214, Durbin-Watson = 2.026

p-value calculated by Multiple Regression Analysis

1), 2), 3)(scale1-5) 1: Absolutely no, 1: No, 3: Average, 4: Yes, 5: Absolutely yes

4)(scale1-4) 1: Almost not washed, 2: Sometimes washed, 3: Often washed, 4: Always washed.

5)(scale1-3) 1: Decreased, 2: Similar, 3: Increased

## 4. Summary and suggestion

This study analyzed the impact of couples' gender role attitudes, self-esteem, and marital relationships on psychological well-being. The results of the study showed that flexible gender role attitudes tend to increase marital relationship satisfaction and improve psychological well-being. This is similar to but different from the results of previous studies as some studies emphasize that tradi-

tional gender role attitudes can increase the stability of marital relationships. First, when examining the relationship between gender role attitudes and self-esteem, this study showed that flexible gender role attitudes tend to increase self-esteem. This result is consistent with that of the study of Aslan(2024)[11], suggesting that gender role flexibility increases the self-esteem of spouses and contributes to the formation of positive relationships. On the other hand, some studies reported that performing traditional

gender roles can provide stability in the family[6]. Thus, the relationship between gender role attitudes and self-esteem is likely to differ depending on the individual's values and social environment. Therefore, the individual's values and social environment should be analyzed and a couples education program for each life cycle should be developed based on the results to achieve successful results. In his study, Jung (2019)[12] also found that spouses with high self-esteem tend to increase marital satisfaction through positive communication, which is consistent with the results of this study. However, some studies pointed out that excessively high self-esteem may lead to an attitude of excluding the spouse's opinion[13]. In a study by Asadi(2025)[14] that compared the relationship between self-esteem and marital satisfaction in various cultures, high self-esteem showed a positive correlation with marital satisfaction in all cultures, and the effect was especially stronger in individualistic cultures. This study also found out that self-esteem is an important factor in improving the quality of married life.

The relationship between couples' leisure sharing activities and marital satisfaction also showed similar results to those of previous studies. In this study, it was found that the more leisure time couples spend together, the higher their marital satisfaction, which is consistent with the study of Jung(2019)[12]. However, the frequency of leisure sharing tended to decrease with age, which suggests that it may be a factor in forming emotional distance between couples. On the other hand, some studies reported that emotional support and division of roles act as more important factors than leisure sharing[15].

Therefore, future studies need to analyze the importance of leisure activities by age group in more detail.

In the relationship between gender role attitudes and marital relationships and psychological well-being, this study showed that more flexible gender role attitudes increase marital relationship satisfaction and psychological well-being. This result is similar to that of a previous study[15], which showed that couples with equal gender role attitudes had higher psychological stability and improved quality of married life. However, some studies reported that performing traditional gender roles can provide stability in early married life[8].

A foreign meta-analysis study also showed that couples with equal gender role attitudes showed higher marital satisfaction than those with traditional gender role attitudes[16].

Based on the results of this study, the following practical suggestions can be presented:

First, there is a need to promote flexibility of gender role attitudes through couple education programs. Since it was found that traditional awareness of gender roles

can lower marital relationship satisfaction, educations to promote equal division of roles and mutual respect are required. Second, psychological support to increase self-esteem of couples should be strengthened. In particular, spouses with low self-esteem are more likely to experience negative emotions, so it is necessary to expand counseling programs and psychological support. Third, policy support is required to increase opportunities for leisure sharing between couples. Encouraging leisure activities that couples can do together and establishing social programs that support them can increase marital satisfaction.

In conclusion, a systematic couple education program that includes awareness of gender roles, enhancement of self-esteem, intimate communication and expression of affection, and leisure sharing methods that can increase positive psychological well-being should be developed to improve the quality of couple relationships for couples with low education, short duration of marriage, and low income quantile.

This study is of significance in that it analyzed the main factors affecting the quality of marital relationships and psychological well-being. However, it has limitations in that the research subjects were limited to certain age groups, and future research needs to consider differences by age group. In addition, long-term research on qualitative improvement of marital relationships could contribute to the development of more specific action plans.

## Author Contribution

Hye Jeong Hwang: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Supervision.

Kwang Hwan Kim: Methodology, Validation, Writing – review & editing, Project administration.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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