



Vol.5. S1., 2018

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA  
2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

**SOUTH KOREA'S GENDER INEQUALITY AND MISOGYNY IN SOUTH KOREA'S MISOGYNY BY  
SE WONG KOO**

**VARSHINI T**

I M.A English literature

PSGR Krishnammal College for women

Varshini24031998@gmail.com

Se-Woong Koo is the managing editor of Korea Exposé, an online magazine specializing in the Korean Peninsula. He earned his Ph.D. from Stanford University and taught Korean studies at Stanford, Yale and Ewha Women's University. Se-Woong Koo has 72 articles published. He has written for The New York Times and Foreign Policy. This article was published in The New York Times as well in his website on June 26, 2016.

Se Woong Koo, a South Korean writer and publisher who has encountered women discrimination through her mother's married life as well as in patriarchal society. She was married off to a conservative person, whom she gradually realized that didn't care for her. Divorce was still a taboo, so she opted to go to Canada with his son in low.

Backtrack to 150 years; Korean had accepted a religion called "Confucianism" which gives the idea "that men are greater than women". This concept is also a reason for the prevailing gender inequality is still in the Korean society. This religion has affected many aspects of the South Korean culture, including the person's role in society. Inequality in South Korea is practiced in unequal access to jobs, an unfair amount of job discrimination and having social construction and culture that gives unfair disadvantages towards women. Even though there has been some improvements on women's gender equality here are still systems that make up gender inequality, and it makes women's lives harder to live with the country's inequality of gender social construction.

On May 17 the shocking news was released that a young woman had been stabbed to death in a bar restroom in a busy shopping district in Seoul. But the male suspect's motive stunned people even more. After the arrest, he told the police that he committed the crime because that woman had always ignored him. The incident prompted testimonials from many women about the amount of misogyny they endure. A large number of men, in turn, dismissed the notion that the killing was an act of misogyny and said that women were being hysterical. Many men would rather not acknowledge that South Korea is an entrenched patriarchy and that toxic gender relations are taking a toll on society. Too many of them are treated like second-class citizens and suffer undue violence, objectification and discrimination. The typical male response to the incident killing hints at just how deep misogyny runs. Men invaded the memorial websites for the victim and flooded comment sections, telling women they were overreacting.

"You are as helpless as you let yourself be," one man said on Facebook.

The culture of misogyny and gender inequality are affecting family life, in a country facing predictions of population collapse. Research shows that a low fertility rate in developed countries reflects backward attitudes over female gender roles. Thus the domestic violence has become predominant theme recently. Meanwhile, South Korean men hold the record for doing the least amount of housework among the men in the world's most developed countries. An average of just 45 minutes per day, or one-fifth of the time a South Korean man spends for helping the household chores.

One important step would be to pass the anti-discrimination bill, which has stalled in the National Assembly for nearly a decade. It would mandate equal treatment for everyone regardless of gender or other factors. A clearly worded law would signal that women and minorities deserve equal rights. Passing the anti-discrimination bill would help reduce discrimination, create legal protections and reduce misogyny. Although various United Nations conventions urge adoption of such a law, similar efforts have failed three times in the National Assembly since 2007 due to objections from the business community.

Women made up 86 percent of all violent crime victims in 2013, according to police data most of the violent crime is sexual in nature, and women suffer disproportionately from sexual crimes. Women aren't safe at home, either: Reports of violence against women by their husbands have been rising in recent years. In the World Economic Forum Korea ranks the country 115th out of 145 countries in gender equality. Women earn only two-thirds of what men earn, according to the Ministry of Employment and Labour. Women made up 2.3 percent of corporate executives at 348 of the largest 500 companies in South Korea in 2015.

The social construction of South Korea was a concept that was believed that women were only meant to stay at home. Since this expected to be the social role of women, more than 1 in 5 of women were forced to leave their jobs to pursue being a housewife and take care of the kids. While less than 1% men only use their paternity leave as companies pressure the males that by having paternity leave, it can prevent them from being more successful in their job. That is the reason for women being less in number to take up high positions in their job once they get married. While men on the other hand, would be the ones with higher position because they were not prevented from working. They were also given more support to keep pursuing their career and were given more benefits compared to women and this gives women a lesser chance to go further with their careers.

As it says in the article by Darcie Draudt "Korean women comprise 19.4% of lawyers, 23.9% of doctors and 23% of university professors." This is a low amount of women who are working in these specialized areas, since it is known that would take a while to work and study for all these jobs, by they are finished they could have been married or leave their careers. There was also a report from the Wall street journal that there were 1,787 companies in South Korea and only 13 women were CEOs. There is a big difference of both genders in this position. The reason would be because women are still not looked upon as equal to male. This shows how women are not given a fair advantage of jobs available compared to men.

More than two decades have passed. Se Woong Koo's mother keeps her address in Canada but now spends considerable time with his father in Seoul. She also dines occasionally with his father, a frail man in his 90s. The arrangement works since the men in her life have grown subdued and she has more say over her life. His mother has made peace with her life finally after leaving the judgmental society and patriarchal family. His father later understood his mother's worth during his old age. With time, gender equality came into their family.

His change of heart comes too late for her, but it is not too late to give respect to South Korean women of new generation. Being open-minded is the only key that can solve this discrimination among Korean society. Korean people should also get accustomed to the idea of equality for both genders. Instead of treating people by their genders, one should treat them as individuals and show them their due respect equally irrespective of age and gender. A severe law should be passed against the misogynistic acts of men towards women. Family plays a vital role in developing an individual's character and habits. Thus, people should take initiatives to install equality among genders to upcoming generations and youth, especially men. By installing gender equality, the society as well as country can attain peace and that is the people's responsibility to strive for women's equality and make the country a better place to live in order to gain peace for the livelihood of women, men and children as well as all living beings.

#### **Work Cited**

Koo Se Woong. "South Korea's Gender Inequality and Misogyny". *South Korea's Misogyny*. New York Times. Seoul . 13 June 2016. Print.