

The Gendered Implications of Intensive Parenting Beliefs for Life Satisfaction: The Case of South Korea

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Abstract

With the emergence of intensive parenting ideologies, child-centered and resource-intensive parenting methods have become the new norm. Regardless of their prevalence, the impact of the internalization of intensive parenting norms on adult well-being remains a relatively unexplored topic. Using an original survey of 728 married adults in South Korea, this study focused on three important questions: (a) What kinds of intensive parenting attitudes do Korean adults internalize compared with adults in Western countries? (b) Do gender differences exist in the acceptance of intensive parenting attitudes? and (c) Is higher acceptance of intensive parenting attitudes associated with negative life satisfaction? The results indicate that Korean adults prioritize economic provisioning and resource-oriented investments for their children. This is in line with the “risk flow” theory that emphasizes the role of social and wealth reproduction through family formation. Additionally, although men and women share similar levels of intensive parenting beliefs, the implications for life satisfaction vary by gender. While women with higher levels of intensive parenting attitudes report a significant deterioration in life satisfaction, male respondents do not report the same negative effects. The conclusion is drawn that while gendered parenting beliefs may seem nonexistent on the surface, they continue to prevail in indirect ways that impact women’s subjective well-being.

Key words

Intensive parenting, life satisfaction, gendered parenthood norms, South Korea, mothers

Introduction

Whether the experience of parenthood positively or negatively affects parents' well-being remains a fiercely debated subject. Despite the prevalent notion that parenthood brings joy and fulfillment to parents, many studies have presented conflicting evidence. Some researchers have found that, contrary to traditional beliefs, parents with children are more likely to report degradation of psychological well-being and higher levels of anxiety and depression (McLanahan & Adams, 1987; Evenson & Simon, 2005). Based on these findings, research has shifted gears toward exploring the specific causes of personal distress in relation to parenthood. While parenthood undoubtedly entails positive experiences such as stronger social integration (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003) and purpose of life (Emmons, 2003; Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014), it is clear that negative stressors also exist. Acknowledging that parenthood has both "demands and rewards" (Nomaguchi, 2012), it is essential to understand how the notion and practice of parenthood maintain a multifaceted and complex relationship with an individual's well-being (Nelson et al., 2014).

An important distinction is that the state of parenthood and parenting practices have different implications for an individual's life satisfaction. Although the quality of the relationship between parenthood and well-being has been inconsistent in the literature, parenting responsibilities have a consistently negative impact on parents' health. While a child may provide several different benefits such as broadening the parents' social circle and feeling a sense of fulfillment, parenting the child implies costs such as financial burdens and sleep deprivation (Nelson et al., 2014) and time constraints (Pollmann-Schult, 2014). Especially when child-rearing is associated with the predominant culture of "intensive parenting" (Hays, 1996), parents struggle to meet the higher demands and cope with social pressure.

Intensive parenting has become a common phenomenon (Craig, Powell, & Smyth, 2014; Smyth & Craig, 2017; Ishizuka, 2019; Walper & Kreyenfeld, 2022) and an idealized norm of parenting (Faircloth, 2014). However, the impact of these expectations on life satisfaction remains relatively unexplored (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Studies have hinted at how intensive parenting expectations lead to lower mental health in mothers (Rizzo, Schiffrin, & Liss, 2013; Nomaguchi & Fetto, 2018), but not enough studies have confirmed this relationship. Recognizing this gap in the literature, this study focuses on the implications of intensive parenting attitudes for adults' life satisfaction, with three specific contributions.

First, using an original survey, I discuss how intensive parenting can impact

adult life satisfaction in the context of South Korea. Considering that South Korea has the world's lowest fertility rate (CNN, 2022), it is important to evaluate whether intensive parenting plays a role in this social phenomenon. As intensive parenting differs from culture to culture (Loyal, Sutter Dally, & Rasclé, 2017; Gauthier et al., 2021), I examine how South Korea's social background creates specific intensive parenting norms and influences married adults. Second, I add to the discourse on gendered parenting norms by evaluating which intensive parenting attitudes men and women internalize differently. While a more involved form of fatherhood (Dermott, 2003) reduces gendered parenthood norms and bridges the happiness gap between mothers and fathers over time (Preisner, Neuberger, Bertogg, & Schaub, 2020), clear gender differences remain in the practical implications of intensive parenting. Third, and most importantly, I examine the interaction between gender and intensive parenting attitudes to show how intensive parenting disproportionately affects men's and women's life satisfaction. These findings offer a unique contribution to the understanding of how societal and cultural backgrounds influence intensive parenting norms in different ways.

Lowest-Low Fertility in South Korea

According to the 2022 Youth Life Survey conducted by the Korean Institute for Health and Social Affairs (KIHASA), 42.7% of married adults responded that they had no plans to have children in the future. This trend is in line with recent OECD statistics showing South Korea reached a record-low fertility rate of 0.8 (OECD, 2023). Taking into consideration that only 2% of births in South Korea occur outside of marriage (OECD, 2021), fertility decisions continue to be a dilemma almost uniquely faced by married couples. On the surface, this phenomenon might be interpreted as a shift in family values with the rise of individualism, but studies have shown that patterns of familialism continue to prevail among unmarried men and women (Kim, 2013) and the desire for marriage among adults has not declined (Raymo & Park, 2020). Therefore, forgoing marriage and parenthood must be understood as a practical decision in relation to social status and future prospects rather than a change in ideals (Chang & Song, 2010).

Despite the South Korean government's pronatalist campaigns and financial subsidies, young adults continue to exhibit risk-averse behaviors in marriage and parenthood. These risk-averse attitudes are closely related to social class, wherein marriage and fertility intentions become negotiated choices for those who can bear the costs of social reproduction. Expanding on Caldwell's "wealth flow theory"

(1982), Chang (2010) explained the existence of “risk flows” in Korean society. According to Chang, wealth inequality and limited social mobility encourage individuals to forgo marriage and parenthood to prevent the social reproduction of inequality. Recent studies have shown that when young adults have a higher subjective socioeconomic status (Yang & Yoo, 2020) and a positive outlook on future class status (Kim, 2022), the likelihood of marriage and fertility intentions increases. Therefore, in the Korean context, family formation and fertility decisions are conditioned by the premise that families act as reproductive tools for social class.

The underlying notion of social reproduction pressures married couples, especially those with children, to internalize financial responsibility and obligations toward their families. Therefore, the low fertility rate cannot be understood as a positive reinforcement of individualism or self-agency. Rather, marriage and childbearing have become choices restricted to those with the resources to reproduce their social class, while exacerbating the pre-existing structures of inequality. Under these conditions, parenting requires strategic prioritization and entails unique stressors that negatively impact life satisfaction.

Parenthood and Life Satisfaction

Studies examining parents’ life satisfaction (McLanahan & Adams, 1987), happiness (Ross & Van Willigen, 1996), and marital satisfaction (Aldous, 1987) all found negative associations with parenthood. Parenthood also predicts higher possibilities of experiencing poor mental health and depression (Gove & Geerken, 1977; Evenson & Simon, 2005), indicating that it may also lower quality of life. However, this claim has been debated. Contrary to these assertions, consistent findings have shown that parenthood is associated with lower levels of depression and psychological distress (Kandel, Davies, & Raveis, 1985; Bird, 1997). Even if parenthood has negative outcomes (i.e., for well-being and life satisfaction), positive implications, such as stronger life meaning, coexist with those stressors (Umberson & Gove, 1989).

These contradictory findings imply that positive and negative experiences coexist. After all, parenthood is not a black-or-white experience but a continuum of “costs and rewards” (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003). Therefore, recent discussions on parenthood have focused on identifying the stressors and buffers that exist in different phases of raising a child. According to Pollmann-Schult (2014), parenthood itself is a rewarding experience positively related to life satisfaction.

However, the various demands and costs of parenthood (i.e., sacrifice of time, financial stressors) cancel out the positive effects, resulting in an overall negative evaluation of parents' subjective well-being. Specifically, adults with children are more likely to strengthen social integration (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003) and have stronger life meaning with greater happiness (Emmons, 2003; Nelson et al., 2014), but also to have lower self-efficacy (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), more negative emotions and marriage troubles (Nelson et al., 2014), and financial constraints (Bird, 1997; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Pollman-Schult, 2014).

The common conclusion that can be drawn from previous literature is that parenting, rather than parenthood itself, is a stressor for an individual's well-being. Factors that cause a parent's health to deteriorate, such as financial stress, time constraints, and exhaustion, are those especially relevant to the roles that parents must play. If parenting roles have significantly negative effects on parents' health, it is crucial to understand *what kinds* of parenting expectations cause distress and *how* they impact life satisfaction.

The Emergence of Intensive Parenting

The challenges that accompany parenting are multifaceted and parents face various financial, emotional, and social constraints. However, what has caused these challenges to escalate is the emergence of intensified parenting cultures that have become the notion of ideal parenting (Faircloth, 2014). Not only has intensive parenting become a common practice over time (Arendell, 2000; Craig et al., 2014; Walper & Kreyenfeld, 2022), it has also been adopted by parents regardless of their social class (Ishizuka, 2019).

Intensive parenting (hereafter IP), a term derived from the concept of "intensive mothering" coined by Hays (1996), encompasses a more child-centered and involved manner of parenting. According to Hays, intensive mothering ideologies require more time, financial resources, and emotional effort from mothers, as well as guidance from professional experts. Expanding on this concept, Liss, Schiffrin, Mackintosh, Miles-McLean, and Erchull (2013) also examined attitudinal compliance with intensive parenting attitudes (hereafter IPAs) using 25 different items grouped into five factors (essentialism, fulfillment, stimulation, challenging, and child-centered) utilizing the Intensive Parenting Attitudes Questionnaire (IPAQ). However, the practice and categorization of intensive parenting is not identical across countries. In a study conducted in Estonia, Great Britain, and Slovenia, Gauthier et al. (2021) found four different subscales (child-centered, stimulation,

parental responsibility, and expert-guided) to be prevalent in all three countries. In France, Loyal et al. (2017) also found the IPAQ to be unsuitable, therefore they add an additional factor that demonstrates the need to “sacrifice” for children.

The attitudinal and behavioral measures and dimensions of intensive parenting norms vary and not all aspects of intensive parenting are shared. Lankes (2022) found that no group of mothers in the United States embodied all the measures of intensive mothering. Depending on class, age, or race, mothers adopted selective components of intensive mothering, strategizing the roles that they can fulfill. From this conclusion, it is evident that intensive parenting is a multidimensional concept (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020) that does not solely depend on one factor or standard of parenting. In South Korea, where fertility choices are highly correlated with social mobility and risk flows, it can be anticipated that intensified parenting looks different from Western countries. In Korea, intensive parenting is not just a desired ideal, but a necessity.

Gender Differences in Intensive Parenting

Hays’s (1996) conceptualization of “intensive mothering” also highlights the gender essentialist principles of parenting. Traditional gender roles have highlighted the male breadwinner and female caregiver model, which, although no longer necessarily the prevalent arrangement, continues to place the bulk of the parental burden on women (Lewis, 2001; Ciccio & Bleijenbergh, 2014). The prevalence of traditional gender norms and the unequal division of housework (Kim & Cheung, 2015; Qian & Sayer, 2015; Hwang, 2016; Kim, 2017) lead to contrasting experiences of parenthood compared with men. Studies have shown that while parental status has a strong negative relationship with well-being for mothers, the same relationship is not consistently found among fathers (Hansen, Slagsvold, & Moum, 2009; Craig & Brown, 2017; Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). Rather, fathers reported a more positive association with well-being than mothers (Bird, 1997; Nelson et al., 2014).

Even when fathers experience similar parental stress to mothers, the types of parenting stress they acknowledge are clearly gendered. While women express greater concern and anxiety over hands-on care, fathers are more likely to worry about financial responsibilities (Chesley, 2011; Shirani, Henwood, & Coltart, 2012), and their parenting involvement remains predominantly related to recreational physical activities (Craig et al., 2014). Although fathers may actively reject notions of the secondary parent role and advocate for political changes in support

of their involvement, mothers exhibit higher concerns about and involvement in children's academic performance and development (Scheibling & Milkie, 2023). Drawing from these previous conclusions, the first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Women share significantly stronger intensive parenting beliefs than men.

Intensive Parenting Beliefs and Life Satisfaction

As highlighted by Nomaguchi and Milkie's (2020) review, the effects of IP norms on parental well-being are an important yet underdeveloped area of study. Although previous research has established the overwhelming prevalence of intensive parenting, few studies have discussed its impact on adult well-being. Where such studies have been carried out, many have limited their samples to mothers, disregarding the impact on fathers (Nomaguchi & Fetto, 2018). As the literature finds that mothers who strongly believe in intensive mothering attitudes experience a significant deterioration in mental health (Rizzo et al., 2013; Gunderson & Barrett, 2017), the second hypothesis seeks to explore how IPAs impact overall life satisfaction for both genders.

H2: Higher intensive parenting beliefs are associated with lower life satisfaction among married adults.

Finally, while IPAs are negatively associated with life satisfaction, the effects may be disproportionate depending on gender. Previous longitudinal studies have found that intensive mothering beliefs worsen partner relationships owing to unequal childcare responsibilities (Faircloth, 2021), implying higher parenting burdens for women. Similarly, Musick, Meier, and Flood (2016) used the American Time-Use Survey to confirm the gendered implications of intensive parenting for women's subjective well-being. Although being with their child for various parenting activities may increase overall subjective well-being, mothers uniquely express a degradation of happiness and report greater levels of fatigue. Based on these findings, the third and final hypothesis is as follows:

H3: Intensive parenting beliefs have stronger negative effects on life satisfaction for married women than for married men.

Data and Methods

Currently, no representative survey data in South Korea have explored IPAs and their implications for well-being. Acknowledging this data limitation, an original

survey was conducted among 728 married Korean adults (age 27–65 years) to examine their gendered beliefs about intensive parenting. The survey was conducted by one of Korea’s largest online research companies, Micromill Embrain, which utilizes its own survey panel consisting of 1,623,938 (as of October 2022). The survey panels were constructed to represent the demographics of the Korean National Census.

Data were collected in April 2022 and originally included 1,236 respondents through panel sampling, with a final sample of 728 adults. As childbirth outside marriage rarely occurs in South Korea, only legally married Korean respondents were selected for this study.

The study sample reflects how the social pressure of IP impacts the life satisfaction of married individuals. Although the data do not distinguish between those with or without children, the respondents of this study are reasonable sample targets because they reflect the social expectations of parenthood and the costs associated with intensive child rearing. A total of 374 women and 354 men were surveyed to examine gender differences in IPAs, and respondents’ average age was 49.5 years. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Mean/ Proportion	SD	Min	Max
Life satisfaction	“How satisfied are you with your life in general these days?” (0 = <i>Not satisfied at all</i> , 10 = <i>Very satisfied</i>)	5.861	1.805	1	10
Intensive parenting beliefs	Four separate statements (1 = <i>Strongly disagree</i> , 2 = <i>Disagree</i> , 3 = <i>Neutral</i> , 4 = <i>Agree</i> , 5 = <i>Strongly agree</i>)				
“Child-centered”	a) “Being a parent means never having time for oneself”	3.192	0.961	1	5
“Responsible”	b) “My child’s success solely depends on me as a parent”	3.078	0.880	1	5
“Sacrificing”	d) “As a parent, I should be willing to sacrifice my job and career for my children”	2.834	0.942	1	5
“Resource-intensive”	c) “I feel (or would feel) guilty when I can’t provide the economic support my child needs”	3.690	0.819	1	5

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics (Continued)

Variable	Description	Mean/ Proportion	SD	Min	Max
Male	(Reference: female)	48.63%			
Age	(Survey respondents were 27 years or older)	49.534	9.553	27	65
Education	“What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?”	4.933	0.579	2	6
	1 = <i>Did not graduate elementary school</i>	0%			
	2 = <i>Graduated elementary school</i>	0.14%			
	3 = <i>Graduated middle school</i>	0.55%			
	4 = <i>Graduated high school</i>	17.86%			
	5 = <i>Graduated college</i>	68.82%			
	6 = <i>Above bachelor's degree</i>	12.64%			
Employed	“What is your current employment status?” (1 = <i>Employed</i>)	82.14%			
Household Income	“What is your monthly household income?”	5.615	1.812	1	8
	1 = <i>Less than 1000K KRW</i>	0.82%			
	2 = <i>1000K - 2000K KRW</i>	2.75%			
	3 = <i>2000K - 3000K KRW</i>	9.20%			
	4 = <i>3000K - 4000K KRW</i>	17.45%			
	5 = <i>4000K - 5000K KRW</i>	18.96%			
	6 = <i>5000K - 6000K KRW</i>	16.90%			
	7 = <i>6000K - 7000K KRW</i>	9.75%			
	8 = <i>Above 7000KRW</i>	24.18%			
Metropolitan	“Where is your current district of residency?” (Metropolitan cities like Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon were coded as “Metropolitan”)	47.39%			
	Seoul	15.93%			
	Busan	6.18%			
	Daegu	4.26%			
	Incheon	6.59%			
	Gwangju	3.02%			
	Daejeon	2.47%			
	Ulsan	2.06%			
	Gyeonggi-do	24.86%			
	Gangwon-do	3.98%			
	Chungcheongbuk-do	3.43%			
	Chungcheongnam-do	5.63%			
	Jeollabuk-do	3.98%			
	Jeollanam-do	3.16%			
	Gyeongsangbuk-do	4.67%			
	Gyeongsangnam-do	7.14%			
	Jeju	1.65%			
	Sejong	0.96%			

The outcome variable, *life satisfaction*, was based on the question: “How satisfied are you with your life in general these days?” The survey participants were asked to respond on a scale of 1 = *Not satisfied at all* to 10 = *Very satisfied*. The average score for life satisfaction was 5.861 with a standard deviation of 1.805. The main predictor for this survey, IPAs, was categorized into four different factors that reflect intensified parenting norms in South Korea: (a) child-centered, (b) responsible, (c) sacrificing, and (d) resource-intensive. Although this study does not include behavioral indicators of IP, I focus on the important perceptions that make up IP and how individuals internalize these benefits differently. Similar to previous conceptualizations of intensive parenting, this study excludes the “fulfillment” and “essentialism” aspects of intensive parenting norms, as the two are relatively irrelevant to the “intensity” of parenting (Gauthier et al., 2021). The first factor, “child-centered,” was measured using the statement “Being a parent means never having time for oneself.” The questionnaire reflected Hays’s (1996) original concept of intensive mothering, in which children’s needs must be put first at the cost of parents’ time and needs. The second factor, “responsible,” examines the importance of parents taking full responsibility for a child’s development and success. Respondents were asked to evaluate the statement “My child’s success solely depends on me as a parent.” Reflecting on previous literature, it is likely that Korean parents are more likely to endorse the cultural expectation of “*cheek-im*” which is in line with the second question (Cote, Kwak, Putnick, Chung, & Bornstein, 2015). Here, “*cheek-im*” derives from the Confucianist emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between the parent and the child, in which the parent’s duty is to be fully responsible for their child, including their later success in life. The third factor emphasizes the prioritization of parents “sacrificing” their personal life for more time with children. The statement “As a parent, I should be willing to sacrifice my job and career for my children” examines whether the principle of sacrifice is a significant aspect of IP and explains whether the belief comes with gendered differences. Finally, the “resource-intensive” demands of IP are measured with the statement “I feel (or would feel) guilty when I can’t provide the economic support my child needs.” Not only is economic provisioning a part of the original conceptualization of intensive mothering, it also reflects the growing importance of economic investment in children’s various social and educational opportunities. The responses ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*, with the “sacrifice” factor reporting the lowest average of 2.834 and the “resource-intensive” factor reporting the highest average of 3.690. The control variables used in this study were respondents’ age, education, employment status,

household income, and residency.

I used t-tests and multivariate OLS regressions to test the study's three hypotheses. Using an interaction effect, I examined the different associations between intensive parenting and life satisfaction depending on gender, and carried out separate analyses for male and female respondents.

Results

Gender Differences in Intensive Parenting Beliefs

To test the first hypothesis, I examined gender differences for each IP item that measured a distinct dimension of the concept. Table 2 shows the distribution of responses and the t-test results for all items. Child-centered parenting attitudes showed the greatest and most significant gender differences. While most married men were “neutral” about the idea, the majority of female respondents agreed with the statement, resulting in an average score of 3.318. As the average for male respondents was 3.059, t-test results indicated that women do in fact have stronger beliefs about sacrificing their own time for child-centered parenting styles. Another dimension of intensive parenting that reported significant gender differences was “resource-intensive” which points to the economic strain parents go through when raising a child. Contrary to traditional beliefs about gendered parenting norms, the results showed that women are more economically concerned when raising a child. However, it is also important to note that the mean difference for “resource-intensive” attitudes, even if statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), was less than 0.05.

However, emphasis on parental responsibility did not show significant gender differences, though men had a slightly higher average score (3.088) than women (3.070). Married men were also more likely to endorse the belief that they were responsible actors for children's development and success, which confirms the expectations of “*check-im*.” Finally, the component of “sacrificing” focused on whether parents should sacrifice their own careers for child-rearing. Responses here produced the lowest average scores for both genders, with 2.896 for women and 2.768 for men. The t-test results showed no significant gender differences, raising doubts about the notion that men and women share different levels of IPAs. However, considering the fact that 82% of the respondents were employed, it may be possible that most respondents shared a stronger need to keep their jobs to ensure financial support for their children. It can be concluded that while wom-

en and men show different IPA levels, the differences are minimal and inconsistent.

Table 2
Gender Difference in Intensive Parenting Attitudes (T-test)

Item	Total	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	S.D.	t
Being a parent means never having time for oneself (Child-Centered)	F	374	16	64	110	153	31	3.318	0.051
	M	354	14	81	142	104	13	3.059	0.048
My child's success solely depends on me as a parent (Responsible)	F	374	12	81	163	105	13	3.070	0.045
	M	354	13	73	151	104	13	3.088	0.047
As a parent, I should be willing to sacrifice my job and career for my children (Sacrificing)	F	374	22	111	138	90	13	2.896	0.049
	M	354	30	110	129	82	3	2.768	0.049
I (feel or would feel) guilty when I can't provide the economic support my child needs (Resource-Intensive)	F	374	2	22	93	203	54	3.762	0.041
	M	354	5	26	113	167	43	3.613	0.045

The Relationship between Intensive Parenting Beliefs and Life Satisfaction

Despite the similar acceptance of IPAs by both men and women, the findings cannot be interpreted as an egalitarian shift. Its effects on life satisfaction require further analysis to confirm that married men and women share the burdens of parenting expectation in the same ways. In other words, the mere acceptance of a belief does not indicate that the respondents will internalize these values or be affected by their pressures. Therefore, I further analyzed the specific dimensions of IP that negatively impact life satisfaction.

Table 3 presents the results of the multiple OLS regressions using *life satisfaction* as the dependent variable. Models 1, 2, and 3 specifically look at how “child-centered” IP beliefs impact life satisfaction and Models 4, 5, and 6 measure how high-

lighting the “responsible” *cheek-im* notion influences individuals’ lives. Models 7, 8, and 9 measure the “sacrificing” aspect of IP while Models 10, 11, and 12 focus on “resource-intensive” expectations of child-rearing. To check the robustness of each model, the first model of each IP dimension included all respondents in the analysis, whereas the second and third models examined the effects separately for female and male respondents.

According to Models 1, 4, 7, and 10, respondents with high IPAs expressed consistent and significant decreases in life satisfaction. Comparatively speaking, expectations of “sacrificing” one’s career for children had significantly lower substantial reductions in life satisfaction compared with others but remained significant. However, when the regression models were run separately for men and women, the negative associations were no longer universally valid. While “child-centrism” and “responsibility” negatively impacted women’s life satisfaction (Models 2 and 5), they were no longer present in the male subgroups. Interestingly, the “resource-intensive” measure was the only IPA that was consistently significant for both men and women, indicating that economic provisioning is the common stressful factor for married men and women with children.

In addition to IPAs, higher education and household income have also been reported as consistently increasing life satisfaction. These results confirm the previous discussion on South Korea’s social background, where socioeconomic resources and class play important roles in happiness and in marriage and fertility decisions. The regression analysis confirmed the mixed results for Hypotheses 1 and 2. While married adults with higher IPAs commonly reported lower life satisfaction, this was not consistent for all genders. For women, child-centered, responsible, and resource-intensive factors negatively affected life satisfaction, except for the sacrifice component. In other words, women were not significantly affected by societal demands to give up their careers for their children. Considering that 70% of married women were engaged in some form of employment, it is likely that the notion of sacrificing one’s job could be an easily rejected notion for the respondents. For men, only one IPA factor (economic provisioning) had a significantly negative impact on life satisfaction. Although men did not show significant differences in IP scores, the regression analysis confirmed that men did not internalize IPAs as much as women did. Men may accept and agree with parenting attitudes; however, with respect to actualizing these responsibilities, women bear the brunt of fulfilling their expectations.

Table 3
Regression of Intensive Parenting Beliefs on Individual's Life Satisfaction

	(1) All	(2) Women Only	(3) Men Only	(4) All	(5) Women Only	(6) Men Only
Male	-1.211** (0.459)			-1.684*** (0.471)		
Intensive parenting						
Child-centered	-0.452** (0.091)	-0.446*** (0.090)	-0.156 (0.102)			
Responsible				-0.455*** (0.103)	-0.456*** (0.103)	0.033 (0.105)
Sacrificing						
Resource-intensive						
Age	-0.008 (0.007)	-0.000 (0.010)	-0.014 (0.010)	-0.006 (0.007)	0.003 (0.010)	-0.013 (0.010)
Education	0.293* (0.118)	0.372* (0.155)	0.200 (0.184)	0.256* (0.118)	0.293 (0.156)	0.225 (0.184)
Employed	0.293 (0.186)	-0.241 (0.206)	0.221 (0.454)	-0.187 (0.187)	-0.278 (0.206)	0.239 (0.457)
Household income	0.227*** (0.038)	0.264*** (0.051)	0.181** (0.056)	0.234*** (0.038)	0.274*** (0.051)	0.182** (0.057)
Metropolitan	-0.057 (0.129)	-0.102 (0.179)	0.018 (0.188)	-0.082 (0.130)	-0.144 (0.180)	0.012 (0.189)
Interaction Effect						
Male x Intensive parenting attitudes	0.303* (0.136)			0.500 ** (0.146)		
Constant	5.271*** (0.733)	4.358*** (0.977)	4.682*** (1.116)	5.225*** (0.750)	4.464*** (0.996)	3.919** (1.128)
Observations	728	374	354	728	374	354
Pseudo R ²	0.106	0.150	0.060	0.097	0.161	0.054

Note. Standard errors are shown in parentheses.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Table 3 (continued)
Regression of Intensive Parenting Beliefs on Individual's Life Satisfaction (Continued)

	(7) All	(8) Women Only	(9) Men Only	(10) All	(11) Women Only	(12) Men Only
Male	-0.639 (0.414)			-1.118 (0.590)		
<u>Intensive parenting</u>						
Child-centered						
Responsible						
Sacrificing	-0.087** (0.095)	-0.087 (0.096)	0.084 (0.100)			
Resource-intensive				-0.580*** (0.112)	-0.585*** (0.112)	-0.319** (0.109)
Age	-0.007 (0.277)	0.001 (0.010)	-0.012 (0.010)	-0.006 (0.007)	0.000 (0.010)	-0.010 (0.010)
Education	0.277* (0.120)	0.316* (0.160)	0.235 (0.184)	0.251* (0.117)	0.296 (0.154)	0.200 (0.182)
Employed	-0.269 (0.189)	-0.380 (0.206)	0.245 (0.455)	-0.274 (0.184)	-0.387 (0.203)	0.241 (0.450)
Household income	0.231*** (0.132)	0.270*** (0.053)	0.181** (0.057)	0.244*** (0.038)	0.284*** (0.051)	0.194** (0.056)
Metropolitan	-0.088 (0.132)	-0.157 (0.184)	0.014 (0.189)	-0.083 (0.129)	-0.181 (0.178)	0.048 (0.187)
Interaction Effect						
Male x Intensive parenting attitudes	0.179 (0.138)			0.251 (0.156)		
Constant	4.109*** (0.762)	3.434*** (1.034)	3.710** (1.140)	6.055*** (0.804)	5.433*** (1.039)	5.102*** (1.126)
Observations	728	374	354	728	374	354
Pseudo R ²	0.740	(0.096)	0.060	0.116	0.157	0.077

Interaction Effect of Gender and Intensive Parenting Beliefs

Models 1, 4, 7, and 10 analyzed the interaction effects between gender and IPAs to visualize gender differences in life satisfaction. Model 1's interaction effect contradicts that of previous models, in which the negative relationship between high IPAs and life satisfaction is buffered among male respondents. The results show that while men are significantly and substantially more likely to report lower life satisfaction rates than women, men with higher IPAs share a significantly more positive outlook on their life satisfaction than women do. The findings are illus-

trated in Figure 1 which depicts the interaction effect and its predictive margins for life satisfaction (90% confidence intervals). The first graph in Figure 1 demonstrates a continuous decline in life satisfaction among women for every unit increase in child-centered parenting beliefs, but not for male respondents. Rather, men showed an undisturbed continuation of their evaluations, despite the escalation of child-centered parenting attitudes. For Model 4, the analysis revealed an even more drastic disparity between men and women in terms of intensive parental responsibility attitudes. While men ($b = -1.684, p < 0.001$) and respondents with higher acceptance of intensive “responsibility” parenting ($b = -0.455, p < 0.001$) reported negative outcomes on life satisfaction, men with higher levels of parental responsibility were impacted not nearly as much as their female counterparts. The second graph in Figure 1 shows an upward increase among men, even with higher rates of intensive responsibility beliefs. In this sense, the findings fail to reject the third hypothesis, that IP has stronger negative implications for married women’s life satisfaction.

However, recalling the contributions of Lankes (2022), I found exceptions to IPAs that Korean adults internalize. Models 7 and 10 examined two components of intensive parenting: “parental sacrifice” and “resource-intensive” attitudes. Compared with the first two factors in Models 1 and 4, these two components did not show clear gender differences in life satisfaction rates. According to Model 7, while “sacrificing” attitudes are minimally associated with negative life satisfaction, the interaction effect between gender and intensive parenting is not statistically significant. Even in Figure 1, the graph indicates a high variability in responses for both men and women. Neither men nor women consider “sacrificing” attitudes to be important factors of IPAs. Finally, Model 10 illustrates the impact of “resource-intensive” parenting attitudes on life satisfaction. Not only do resource-intensive beliefs predict a significant negative evaluation of life satisfaction ($b = -0.580, p < 0.001$), but, according to Figure 1, the pattern is similar for both men and women. The conclusion is that although gendered burdens of IPAs still exist, women do not internalize all the factors of intensive parenting.

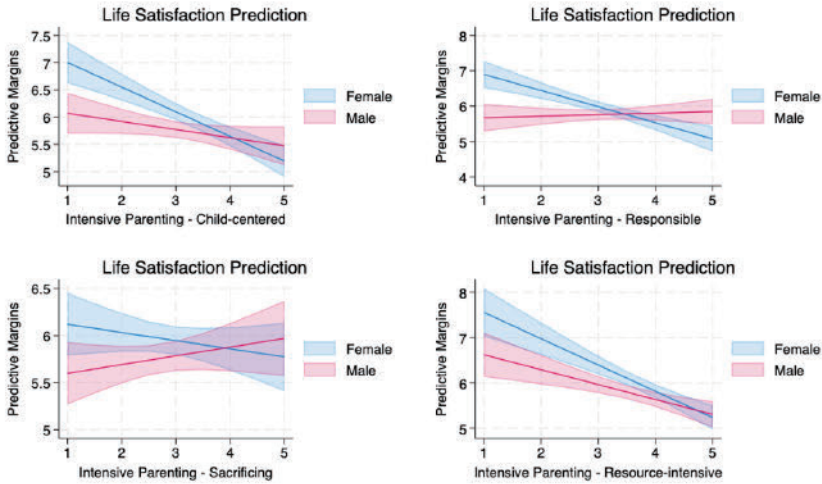


Figure 1. Interaction Effect of Gender and Intensive Parenting Beliefs on Life Satisfaction

Discussion

The record-low fertility rates and marriage decline in South Korea cannot be understood as a mere shift in family values or an increase in individualistic ideals. Rather, marriage and childbirth have become strategic and privileged choices for families to ensure economic stability. The decision to have a child, therefore, becomes a risky commitment, but also entails heightened societal expectations of intensive parenting to ensure socioeconomic stability for the reproduction of one's wealth and class.

The findings of this study indicate that married Korean adults share relatively similar IPAs regardless of gender. Although women were more likely to agree with parenting beliefs that prioritize child centrism and parental responsibility for their children's success, the differences were minimal and inconsistent. However, when analyzing the effects of IPAs on individual life satisfaction, gender differences were apparent. The study confirmed the gendered effect of intensive parenting, where women's life satisfaction significantly declined with higher internalization of intensive parenting norms. In other words, although men may agree with the pressures and expectations of IP, their beliefs do not necessarily affect their quality of life. This may be because men are less likely to practice those demanding roles in real life or because they are less likely to receive criticism when they fail to meet those expectations.

However, engaging with Lankes's (2022) argument, I also find that not all IPA factors negatively impact women. The "child-centrism" and "responsibility" factors indicated clear gender differences in the deterioration of life satisfaction, while the "sacrificing" and "resource-intensive" factors presented contrasting implications. Not only did respondents have the lowest score for the "sacrificing" factor, the increase of sacrificing attitudes did not have statistically significant effects on the deterioration of life satisfaction. The results are in line with the theory of "risk flow" (Chang, 2010), where fulfilling the roles of financial and economic support is considered an important standard for being an eligible parent. Sacrificing one's job or career is not an appreciated concept of intensive parenthood in South Korea, as it would indicate sacrificing a family's socioeconomic resources. Similarly, the "resource-intensive" measure of IPAs did not report disproportionate gender effects. Both men and women considered economic provisioning to be the parents' most important responsibility, placing equal pressure on both genders. Thus, IPAs in the context of South Korea are highly correlated with the theory of preventing "risk flows" from generation to generation. Women are generally more likely to experience deterioration in life satisfaction owing to parenting norms; however, men are equally under pressure from the demand for financial wealth reproduction for their children.

Despite its unique contributions to the existing literature, this study has some limitations. First, although the dataset is unique in the sense that it includes IPA questions, it does not distinguish between the responses of married adults with and without children. As respondents with children have more realistic experiences of intensive parenting expectations, the distinction between childless and child-rearing parents is of great importance. With the rising proportion of married couples unlikely to have children, further research is needed to explore how IPAs and their impact on life satisfaction affect those with and without children in different ways. In addition, the measures of IP norms are neither exhaustive nor diverse. As findings show that IPAs were prioritized and internalized differently compared with studies in Western contexts, further research is needed to examine Korea's "resource-intensive" parenting phenomenon in a more representative context. Rather than focusing on the factors of parenthood itself, more research should be directed toward understanding the various parental pressures that individuals face and their impact on overall fertility intentions.

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