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Misogyny and Gender Conflicts in South Korea

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Abstract: As a nation renowned for its economic miracles and technological advancements, South Korea – officially, the Republic of Korea – is simultaneously grappling with deeply rooted gender conflicts that reflect a broader societal struggle. Despite its rapid modernization, South Korea remains deeply influenced by Confucian traditions that have historically dictated rigid gender roles, resulting in the ongoing patriarchy and systemic marginalization of women in many aspects of their lives. These entrenched norms have given rise to pervasive misogyny, a significant social issue that continues to shape gender relations and provoke conflicts in contemporary Korean society. The seemingly veneer of modernity belies the persistent influence of traditional Confucian and patriarchal values that continue to profoundly shape gender relations and power structures within the country. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of South Korea's gender landscape, illuminating the connection between its modern strides and the enduring influence of its cultural heritage. By exploring this dichotomy, it seeks to inform policymaking, social discourse, and grassroots efforts to foster a more equitable and inclusive future for all Koreans, irrespective of gender.

Keywords: Misogyny, gender conflicts, patriarchy, feminism.

1. Introduction

A rigid dichotomy exists in South Korea – despite its rapid modernization since the 1960s, which has transformed it into a global economic powerhouse and technological leader, the country continues to grapple with deeply entrenched gender norms and conflicts that have proven stubbornly resistant to change. The background of this research lies in the duality of South Korea's social fabric. On one hand, the nation's rapid industrialization and the rise of its tech-driven economy have undoubtedly empowered women, providing greater educational and professional opportunities. On the other hand, this progress has not translated into a commensurate shift in societal attitudes and power dynamics. This progress has been met with resistance, manifesting in growing gender-based tensions. Traditional Confucian values, which emphasize hierarchical gender roles and the primacy of male authority, continue to exert a strong influence on the country's social environment.

Therefore, this study focuses on the phenomenon of misogyny and the resulting gender conflicts in South Korea. It seeks to explore the underlying causes of these tensions, the ways in which they manifest in both online and offline settings, their broader implications for South Korean society, and any efforts that marginalized groups have taken to address the issue. By understanding the roots of misogyny and the factors driving gender conflicts, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing

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discourse on gender equality. The findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and activists working towards creating a more equitable society.

As South Korean society continues to evolve, the resolution of its gender conflicts will be pivotal in shaping the nation's trajectory towards true equality. This study also explores the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in this ongoing struggle, providing a critical understanding of the forces at play in one of Asia's most dynamic yet conflicted societies.

2. Historical and Cultural Roots

2.1. Confucianism

Korean society has maintained a deep-rooted adherence to Confucian traditions that have exerted a profound influence on the country's gender norms and power dynamics for centuries. Confucianism, or a system of ethical philosophy founded by Chinese philosopher Confucius in 551-479 BCE, has shaped East Asian cultures extensively through stressing hierarchy, social harmony, group orientation and respect for elders – all aspects of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean culture that are still very much alive [1]. At the same time, Confucianism has been notorious for its doctrine on patriarchy, as it promoted a hierarchical social structure that enshrines the primacy of male authority and the subservience of women [2].

In South Korea, Confucianism has been described as the "enemy of feminism" and the source of the patriarchal societal structure that has long confined women to domestic spheres. Traditionally, Korean girls were groomed from a young age to fulfill the roles of dutiful wife and mother; however, after the formal establishment of the southern Republic of Korea following the division of the Korean peninsula in 1945, women gained constitutional rights to access public education and employment opportunities outside the home, which has gradually eroded the traditional female gender roles [3]. Nevertheless, while contemporary Korean society is not as rigidly bound by Confucian traditions as in the past, these deep-rooted cultural influences persist, as Korean women now face the challenge of navigating multiple roles – they are increasingly entering the workforce as wage earners, while still being expected to shoulder most childcare and household duties [3].

The Confucian emphasis on filial piety – the virtue of reverent obedience to one's parents and elders – has had a profound impact on the social positioning of women in Korean culture. Filial piety in Korean society have confined women within a framework of three rigid roles, dictating the "acceptable" behaviors for women at different stages of their lives: young unmarried women are expected to embody the idealized image of the chonyo – the virtuous virgin; middle-aged women are relegated to the role of the ajumma, the dutiful mother and caretaker; older women are expected to fulfill the role of the halmoni, the revered grandmother. Any women that fail to fulfill the societal expectations are relegated to the changnyo, or the prostitute, as noted by South Korean contemporary poet Hyesoon Kim: "In Korea, a woman must first obey her father, then her husband when she becomes an ajumma, and finally obey her son as a halmoni. Any woman who violates or lives outside of these roles is called a changnyo" [4].

Alongside filial piety, the tenet of family loyalty has further reinforced the subservient status of women within the household. The family unit is viewed as the fundamental social unit in Confucian thought, and women are thus required to subsume their personal interests for the sake of maintaining familial harmony and upholding the family's social standing. The expectations for women to dutifully fulfill their roles as obedient daughters, dutiful wives, and self-sacrificing mothers have become a formidable obstacle to gender equality and an egalitarian society.

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2.2. Patriarchy

Confucian principles have, in numerous ways, deeply influenced the ways in which patriarchy persists within many East Asian societies. Rather than a social system, patriarchy is better understood as a system of values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality [5]. In a patriarchal system, a male, superior in hierarchy, often oppresses and exploits the female, though patriarchy does not operate solely through overt forms of oppression but also through the internalization of these gendered beliefs and expectations [6]. Even women themselves often unconsciously uphold patriarchal norms, having been socialized to view male dominance and female subservience as inevitable and natural.

The case of South Korea, however, is rather different, as the manifestation of patriarchy in this context has also been heavily influenced by the country's unique historical, political, and socioeconomic trajectories. The traditional Korean society was deeply patriarchal, with women subjected to the authority of their fathers, husbands, and eldest sons over the course of their lives. This burden was not alleviated during the colonial era from 1910 through 1945; rather, the oppression of Korean women intensified under Japanese rule. Prior to colonization, ancient Korean society had a more matrilineal social structure, but as the country became more developed and experienced colonial occupation, the status of women steadily declined. This shift has been attributed to Korean men's attempts to assert their own sense of superiority in the face of Japanese domination, leading to the further subjugation of Korean women [7].

Under Japanese colonial rule, the lives of Korean women became even harder as they were now expected to labor outside the home while still being urged to uphold traditional "virtues" that were increasingly conflated with the "Korean way" [7]. Women had to comply with the demands of not only their husbands and in-laws, but also the colonial authorities, leaving them with little to no autonomy.

Following the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the Korean peninsula was divided, and the South was placed under American administration, and the Republic of Korea was officially established as an independent nation [8]. The ensuing decades witnessed a gradual shift in the status of Korean women – with the emergence of democracy and capitalism, women increasingly entered the workforce, engaged in political activities (with their suffrage recognized in the 1948 Constitution), and gained more access to higher education, including college and university degrees.

However, despite the improvements in education, gender disparities persisted in more subtle forms. Gender discrimination was widespread, often going unquestioned. Although women were no longer barred from participating in economic activities, they faced poor working conditions, lower wages compared to men, and sexual harassment in the workplace, which discouraged many from continuing in their jobs. In a 2023 survey, 11% of women reported experiencing unwanted sexual advances in the workplace, compared to just 3.4% of men [9]. Nearly half of the women surveyed had heard sexist remarks from coworkers, and the number of women who reported inappropriate comments about their physical appearance was three times higher than that of men [9]. Hence, patriarchy remains within South Korean society, despite the nation's impressive economic and democratic advancements, and the struggles of Korean women to assert their rightful place in all spheres of life remain a vital component of achieving true gender equality in South Korean society.

2.3. Socioeconomic Factors

The complex socioeconomic dynamics in South Korea have had a significant impact on the country's progress towards gender equality. While the rapid industrialization and economic development that transformed South Korea in the latter half of the 20th century did open new opportunities for women's

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participation in the workforce and public sphere, deep-seated patriarchal attitudes have proven to be remarkably resilient.

In the late 20th century, South Korea embarked on a rapid industrialization program, shifting from an agricultural economy to a manufacturing-based one. This process opened up new employment opportunities for women, who were increasingly drawn into the burgeoning factory workforce, and the participation rate of women in the labor force rose from 27.6% in 1960 to 39.3% by 1980 [10]. However, this increased participation was largely confined to low-skilled, labor-intensive industries, such as textiles and electronics, and women were often relegated to the least desirable and lowest-paying jobs, with limited opportunities for advancement. Despite their growing economic contributions, the prevailing social norms and patriarchal attitudes of the time continued to relegate women to traditional domestic roles.

As South Korea's economy shifted towards higher value-added sectors, such as heavy industry and technology, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, women's employment prospects improved somewhat. More educated women were able to secure professional and managerial positions, albeit at a much slower pace than their male counterparts. The glass ceiling remained firmly in place, with gender-based discrimination in hiring, promotion, and pay persisting throughout the country's rapid development.

The election of Yoon Suk-yeol as president in 2022 has further complicated the matter. Candidate Yoon Suk-yeol, during the 2022 South Korean presidential race, denied the existence of structural gender inequality and vowed to abolish the Ministry of Family and Gender Equality after his inauguration [11]. This stance has resonated with young men in South Korea, who overwhelmingly believe that discrimination against men is a severe problem, and by catering to young men, Yoon quickly became a competitive candidate and narrowly won the presidency in March 2022 [11].

However, South Korea ranks poorly on global gender equality scales, as incidents of violence against women – including domestic violence, sexual harassment at work, rape, and murder – have become increasingly common. In the 2022 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, South Korea ranked 99th out of 146 countries – lagging far behind other developed nations. In the 2023 report, the country's ranking has dropped even further to 105th, underscoring the worsening nature of gender conflicts in the nation. A 2015 survey conducted by the South Korean government revealed that 80% of respondents, mostly women, had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace. In a 2017 study of 2,000 Korean men, Human Rights Watch reported that nearly 80% of male participants admitted to committing acts of violence against an intimate partner [11]. These deeply concerning incidents and trends have drawn international attention to the troubling reality of gender-based crimes and discrimination in a country that is otherwise celebrated for its economic and technological advancements.

3. Manifestations of Misogyny

3.1. Workplace Discrimination and Gender Pay Gap

The legacy of South Korea's rapid economic growth has given rise to persistent issues of gender-based discrimination in the workplace – despite the growing participation of women in the workforce, South Korean women are still experiencing widespread gender discrimination in the workplace, facing inappropriate comments or remarks three to four times more often than men, according to a recent survey [9]. The survey, conducted online by Embrain Public for the nonprofits Gapjil 119 and the Beautiful Foundation from August 2 to 10, included 1,000 working adults, 435 of whom were women. The findings revealed that 55.9% of women reported being addressed or referred to with inappropriate terms, a rate 4.5 times higher than that of men, which stood at 12.4% [9]. The survey highlighted terms such as "ajumma", or middle-aged women, and "agassi", a term akin to "miss" for

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a young woman, indicating that although these terms are not inherently sexist, they can carry derogatory or offensive connotations when used in certain contexts.

Women in lower-paying jobs were more likely to encounter this type of mistreatment. Among female workers earning less than 1,500,000 won ($1127) per month, 46.2% reported such incidents, while only 16.4% of those earning over 5,000,000 won per month experienced similar treatment [9]. The survey also showed that 45.1% of women had heard sexist remarks from colleagues, and 44.8% felt unfairly assigned stereotypical tasks, such as preparing coffee. These figures were over three times higher than those reported by men, which were 14.2% and 13.5%, respectively. Moreover, 28.7% of women reported receiving inappropriate comments about their physical appearance, compared to just 10.1% of men [9]. Eleven percent of women reported experiencing unwanted romantic advances from colleagues, a form of sexual harassment, while only 3.4% of men reported similar experiences [9].

It is, therefore, quite evident that Korean women are facing an extremely hostile work environment where their competence and professionalism are heavily undermined by their male colleagues. There is a clear socioeconomic divide, as women in lower-paying jobs were significantly more likely to face inappropriate comments or remarks, compared to higher-earning women making over $5,000 per month. The findings point to an intersection between gender and class, where women facing both gender-based and economic marginalization are the most susceptible to this mistreatment in the workplace. Beyond that, women across the board are subjected to a hostile work environment, with approximately half of them reporting hearing sexist remarks and feeling unfairly assigned stereotypical tasks – rates over 3 times higher than their male counterparts. Taken together, this powerfully demonstrates the entrenched gender inequities and discriminatory treatment that South Korean women face in the workplace, with particularly acute challenges for those in lower socioeconomic positions.

The survey further highlighted significant disparities in employment and income, underscoring South Korea's entrenched gender pay gap. About one in four women reported feeling discriminated against during job recruitment and in terms of salary, with 24.4% and 25.1% of women, respectively, experiencing such bias, while only 7.6% of men reported facing similar discrimination during hiring and salary discussions [9]. These findings are consistent with other existing data – according to 2021 statistics from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OEDC), South Korean women earn nearly one-third less than men the widest gender pay gap among the 38 OECD member countries, where the average gap is 12%. Since joining the OECD 27 years ago, Korea has consistently ranked at the bottom in terms of gender pay equality. A World Bank report published in March even ranked Korea alongside countries such as Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Egypt, and Syria in terms of the gender pay gap, with a score of 25 out of 100 [9]. This appears as a major cause for concern, especially given South Korea's status as a highly developed, high-income economy – as a member of the OECD and G20, South Korea's ranking on the World Bank's gender pays gap index, with a dismal score of just 25 out of 100, stands in stark contrast to the country's advanced economic and technological capabilities.

This data points to a troubling disconnect between South Korea's economic development and its failure to achieve gender parity in the workforce. This is especially problematic given the crucial role that women's economic empowerment and equal participation play in driving sustainable, inclusive economic growth. If the nation's failure to tap into the full productive potential of half its population persists, South Korea is only hobbling its own development and competitiveness on the global stage.

After the data collection process, a representative from Gapjil 119, an organization dedicated to combating workplace abuse, commented on the findings: "The issue of sexual violence in the workplace is often rooted in numerous instances of workplace harassment. Since casual harassment

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and microaggressions can escalate into more serious crimes like stalking and sexual violence, we must develop more effective strategies to address these issues at their core" [9].

3.2. Objectification of Women and Modern Slavery

In today's increasingly digitized world, the troubling phenomenon of the objectification and sexualization of women has taken on new and insidious forms, with the proliferation of online platforms enabling the exploitation and commodification of women's bodies and identities. The notorious "Nth Room Case" provides an example of how the objectification of women can manifest in the digital realm. This online sex trafficking and exploitation ring, which operated from 2018 to 2020, involved the coercion and blackmail of hundreds of women and girls – many of them being minors – into producing sexually explicit content and distributing them without their consent [12]. The case exposed the dark underbelly of South Korea's digital landscape, where the commodification of women's bodies was enabled and amplified by technology.

Criminals are now adept at leveraging technological advancements to evade detection and conceal their illicit activities. The Nth Room relied on the encrypted messaging app "Telegram" to facilitate its operation – the criminals behind the Nth Room operation would often initiate contact with their targets through popular social media platforms like Twitter, before coercing them to move their interactions to the encrypted messaging app Telegram [13]. As one anonymous victim explained in an interview with a Korean radio program, she had no prior knowledge of Telegram, but was persuaded to download it. Once on the app, the person recruiting her demanded sensitive personal information, including her bank account details, address, and phone number. Despite still being in high school, the victim was gradually manipulated into producing explicit images and videos, with her personal data being used as blackmail to keep her compliant [13]. The "shame factor" was also deployed as a means of coercion, with victims threatened with the widespread distribution of intimate content they had been coerced into producing, as stated by one of the victims: "He already had my face, my voice, my personal information. I was afraid that he would threaten me with that information if I said I would quit" [13]. Therefore, the threat of having their most private moments exposed to the world kept many victims trapped in this horrific situation.

The "Nth Room" scandal has sparked outrage and trauma in South Korea, leading to renewed calls for stronger legal measures to combat digital sex crimes. In response, the Korean government has introduced legislative reforms to ensure that those who knowingly consume such content are held accountable as sex offenders. The series of legal challenges, collectively known as the "anti Nth-Room" legislation, called for harsher penalties for any online sex offenders or individuals convicted of online sexual exploitation; the legislation also made it illegal to purchase, possess, or distribute any sexually explicit materials obtained without the subject's consent [14]. The new laws were enacted very soon – in 2021, 87 providers reported deleting 27,575 posts with illicit videos, mostly by Google, and a citizen group monitoring 35 platforms found 16,455 posts with potentially illicit content, of which 34% were censored in some way [14].

However, a key issue is that the laws only apply to domestic providers, not foreign platforms like Telegram where the original "Nth Room" crime occurred. Hence, experts argue the laws have so far been insufficient in preventing similar "Nth Room" type incidents, and calls have been made for stronger measures, such as enabling international cooperation to investigate foreign-based websites, allowing warrantless evidence seizure in serious cases, and granting authorities the power to immediately order the deletion of exploitative content.

Another similar case of sexual exploitation of women is the "Burning Sun" scandal that began in 2018. The scandal centered around the Burning Sun nightclub in the Gangnam district of Seoul, which was co-owned by K-pop idol Seungri of the group "BIGBANG". Allegations surfaced that the club was involved in various illegal activities, including drug distribution, sexual assault, prostitution, tax

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evasion, police corruption, and the hidden camera filming of female club-goers [15]. The secretly recorded sex footages were quickly distributed through a group chat on Korean social media platform KakaoTalk involving Seungri and other influential individuals, where they would make misogynic comments about the victims. Multiple screenshots of the chat were released by Dispatch Korea, an online media outlet specializing in the entertainment industry in Korea, and many of them showed offensive conversations such as “now the sluts are working in bars” and “until recently they were my toys, but now they look like trash” [16]. The perpetrators, however, felt above the law as they were being protected by a senior superintendent of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency – in other words, the superintendent, as an influential figure in South Korea, abused his power and attempted to cover up the criminal acts [14].

This scandal is emblematic of the pervasive issue of misogyny in South Korean society. The scandal is particularly significant in the context of South Korea’s ongoing crisis of digital sex crimes, where hidden cameras, or “molka”, are used to secretly film women in public and private spaces. In both the “Nth room” and the “Burning Sun” case, the sharing of these videos in private and public chat rooms, where participants made degrading and misogynistic comments about the victims, reflects a broader societal problem. It highlights the intersection of technology and misogyny, where digital platforms become tools for the systemic abuse and dehumanization of women.

At the heart of the “Burning Sun” scandal was the exploitation of women by powerful men who felt entitled to use their status to control and abuse – the nightclub, co-owned by Seungri, was more than just a venue for entertainment; it was a hub where illicit activities were allegedly orchestrated and protected by powerful connections within the police force. This not only violated the privacy of these women but also reinforced the idea that women are disposable objects whose bodies can be exploited for male gratification, highlighting a disturbing reality that in the viewpoints of certain groups, women’s privacy and dignity were often viewed as expendable.

The scandal also intensified existing gender conflicts in South Korea. Women, already frustrated by the prevalence of digital sex crimes and the lack of effective legal recourse, saw the “Burning Sun” scandal as a stark example of how deeply entrenched gender inequality is in their society and culture. It sparked widespread protests, with women demanding justice not only for the victims of the Burning Sun scandal but for all women who have suffered under a system that prioritizes male privilege. These protests were part of a broader feminist movement in South Korea, which has been gaining momentum in response to various incidents of gender-based violence and discrimination. One of the most well-known of these feminist protests are the Hyehwa Station Protests, which began in 2018 and involved women demonstrating against misogyny, sexism, proliferation of intimate images without consent, and hidden camera voyeurism [17].

However, the movements also faced significant backlash, particularly from young men who felt threatened by the growing demands for gender equality. Many young men in South Korea believe that they are the victims of reverse discrimination and that the feminist movement is unfairly targeting them, and this sentiment has been exacerbated by economic pressures such as high youth unemployment and rising housing costs, which some men attribute to the increasing presence of women in the workforce [17]. President Yoon capitalized on this resentment during his campaign, dismissing the existence of structural sexism and pledging to impose stricter penalties for false sexual assault claims. His administration has also begun removing references to "gender equality" from school textbooks and has cut funding for programs designed to combat everyday sexism. One lawmaker from Yoon’s party even suggested that those who value gender equality should pursue it on their own time and dime.

The Burning Sun scandal, therefore, not only revealed the depth of misogyny in South Korea but also intensified the gender conflict, as it became a focal point for both feminist activism and anti-feminist sentiment.

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4. Effects on Fertility Rates

Chung Hyun-back, who previously served as President Moon Jae-in's first Minister of Gender Equality and was once responsible for reversing South Korea's declining birthrate, has identified a significant barrier to success: the country's deeply entrenched patriarchal culture. Despite concerted efforts over the past year, her inability to encourage more women to have children underscores the challenges women face in South Korea. Chung, who chose to prioritize her career over marriage and motherhood, reflects a broader trend where many young women are deliberately opting out of motherhood in what is now being called a "birth strike" [18]. A 2022 survey revealed a significant gender difference in attitudes toward having children, with 65 percent of women expressing disinterest in parenthood compared to 48 percent of men. This reluctance extends to marriage as well, with many women avoiding the institution altogether to escape traditional pressures. This phenomenon, sometimes referred to as a "marriage strike," is contributing to South Korea's demographic crisis [18].

For the third consecutive year, South Korea has recorded the lowest fertility rate globally, with the average number of children born per woman falling below one. The country reached a demographic milestone in 2020, known as the "dead cross", where the number of deaths surpassed births – a decade earlier than expected [18]. As a result, nearly half of South Korea's cities, counties, and districts are facing population declines so severe that they risk disappearing entirely. Schools and childcare facilities are being repurposed as nursing homes, reflecting the shift in demographic needs. Several factors contribute to young Koreans' reluctance to start families, including the prohibitive costs of child-rearing, unaffordable housing, poor job prospects, and excessively long work hours [18]. However, women in particular are rejecting the oppressive societal expectations placed on mothers, leading them to forgo motherhood altogether.

President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in 2022, has controversially suggested that feminism is to blame for the breakdown in "healthy relationships" between men and women [18]. However, this perspective overlooks the real issue: gender equality is essential to addressing the country's falling birthrates. Many women are eschewing marriage, dating, and childbirth in response to pervasive sexism and a culture of male dominance. Their refusal to conform to traditional roles is a form of resistance against a society that imposes impossible demands on women without offering respect or support. Protest banners expressing this sentiment highlight the extent of women's frustration.

Addressing South Korea's demographic crisis requires making the country fairer and safer for women, a goal that seems increasingly unattainable under Yoon's conservative administration. The patriarchal culture Chung identified is deeply rooted, with South Korea once having one of the highest fertility rates globally, averaging six children per woman in the 1960s.; however, the government's aggressive population control measures in the name of economic development led to a rapid decline in birth rates, falling below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman within just 20 years [18]. Recent statistics indicate that South Korea's fertility rate was 0.81 in 2021, dropping further to 0.79 in the third quarter of 2022 [18]. Despite successive governments pouring over 280 trillion won, or $210 billion, over 16 years on initiatives to encourage childbirth, such as offering monthly allowances for parents of newborns, these efforts have largely failed to reverse the declining birthrate. This is unsurprising given the persistent gender inequalities that women face: from sexist expectations in pregnancy guidelines to the overwhelming burden of household chores and childcare responsibilities, women are often forced to abandon their careers upon becoming mothers. Even in households with dual incomes, women spend over three hours daily on domestic tasks, compared to just 54 minutes for their husbands [18].

Despite government efforts to encourage marriage and childbearing, the trend remains unchanged, and the current administration's policies appear to be exacerbating the problem. Chung, who served

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as gender equality minister from 2017 to 2018, argues that addressing the birth strike requires acknowledging and addressing women's grievances. A feminist approach would involve enforcing existing anti-discrimination laws, promoting gender equality in domestic responsibilities, destigmatizing births outside of marriage, and unequivocally condemning gender-based violence. Countries with more equitable divisions of child care and robust parental leave policies, such as Sweden, or those that recognize diverse forms of companionship, like France, have managed to stabilize or even increase their birth rates; on the contrary, nations like Japan, the United States, and China, which also struggle with unequal child care burdens and limited parental leave, are experiencing similar declines in fertility [18]. As the United Nations predicts that South Korea's population will halve by the end of the century, the survival of the nation is at stake.

5. Conclusion

In the final analysis, this study has delved into deep-rooted misogyny and gender conflicts that permeate South Korean Society, showing the comprehensive picture of the various forms of discrimination and exploitation that Korean women face. South Korea's remarkable economic and technological advancements have not translated into a commensurate transformation of deeply entrenched gender norms and power structures. Despite the nation's rapid modernization, the persistent influence of traditional Confucian and patriarchal values continue to shape a social environment rife with misogyny and gender-based conflicts.

This, undeniably, holds significant meaning for promoting gender equality and advancing social justice, as the findings not only aid Korean society in further recognizing and reflecting on this deeply-rooted affliction, but can also serve as a reference for other countries grappling with similar issues. As South Korea continues to evolve, the resolution of these deep-seated gender conflicts will be pivotal in charting the nation's trajectory towards true equality. Encouragingly, the study also spotlights the growing feminist activism and grassroots movements challenging the patriarchal order, hinting at the transformative potential of sustained civic mobilization.

The path ahead remains arduous – dismantling the entrenched values will require sustained efforts from a multitude of stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, activists, and the broader public. As one of Asia's most dynamic yet conflicted societies, South Korea's harmony of inclusive progress can only be achieved when the final movement of the symphony is composed – only then can Korean society forge a more equitable future for all.

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