Parental Financial Support and Marriage Timing of Young Adults in South Korea

Introduction

Marriage has been regarded as one of the most significant life-course events in the transition to adulthood. During this process toward adulthood, young adults attempt to establish economic and residential independence (Kim 2015; Swartz 2008). However, recent major societal changes have weakened the social position of young adults in East Asian Countries (Kim 2017; Raymo et al. 2015; Tian 2016); Due to limited employment opportunities, an increasing number of young adults cannot easily find stable employment position. Also, they stay longer in school to build attractive resumes and postpone entering into labor force participation (Piotrowski, Kalleberg and Rindfuss 2015). Even those with a diploma from prestigious universities have trouble obtaining stable jobs after graduation. In addition, tuition at colleges and expensive housing costs have increased every year. Hence, many young adults are facing a greater economic burden in beginning their transition to adulthood, and they live with and/or receive financial support from parents (Aquilino 2005; Bucx, van Wel and Knijn 2012; Johnson 2013; Padgett and Remle 2016).

Parents provide economic support to their young adults because of newly emerging situations for adult children (Fingerman et al. 2012; Sage and Johnson 2012). East Asian countries including South Korea traditionally emphasize the obligation between parents and children (Kim et al. 2015). Korean parents have a responsibility to their children as a successful member of society; parents are expected to pay for gifts and food for children. As well, Korean parents make the highest private investment in education in Asia (Cha and Song 2017). Many parents are willing to provide their children with financial assistance, even after they have grown up. Thus, young adults tend to stay in their parental home until they get

married (Kim 2015). As well, recently, many Korean young adults are relying on financial support from their parents. In this context, parents intensely influence the transition to adulthood of their young adults.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, many researches have investigated the association between young adults' socio-economic resources mainly measured by education, employment status, and income and their timing of entry into marriage (Becker 1973; Choi and Min 2015; Kim 2017; Oppenheimer 1988; Piotrowski et al. 2015; Shafer and James 2013; Sweeney 2002). These studies have shown that socio-economic resources are important determinants of only individuals' marital behavior. Additionally, the existing recent research on family background characteristics to the timing of first marriage of young adults has only focused on parental resources, including parental education, employment status, and household income (Axinn and Thornton 1992; Mooyaart and Liefbroer 2016; South 2001; Wiik 2009). However, despite the importance of familial aspects for young adults' entry into the marital union, most previous studies have not drawn attention to the role that downward transfers play in their marriage.

The purpose of this study investigates whether the downward transfers (or parental financial support) influence young adults' transition to their marriage. We also examine whether the association could vary in each group of young adults divided according to sex, age, living arrangement, and employment status. This research provides evidence that parental financial support undermines children's autonomy and further makes their transition into adulthood.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Downward Transfers

In recent years, an increasing number of young adults have been experiencing many vulnerable economic situations. College enrollment rates have been increased significantly, and most young adults who graduate from high school also have enrolled in college. The overall college enrolment rate for young adults increased 32.3% in 1990 to 79% in 2010 (Korea Statistics, 2010). However, during this period, college tuition also increased. From 1990 to 2000, the average yearly tuitions for private four-year universities increased about 1,000,000 won (=\$936) to 3,880,000 won (=\$3,630). In 2017, the average cost of tuition reached about 6,680,000 won (=\$6,249). In addition, more Korean young adults are living away from their parents, as most of universities are located in major metropolitan areas; 18.9% of adults aged 15 to 29 years lived alone in 2016 (Korea Statistics, 2016). Moving and living costs tend to be significantly higher for those living alone.

Besides, young children may have to study abroad or enter graduate school after graduation from colleges in order to build attractive résumés. Thus, young adults face greater economic difficulties after finishing school. In particular, the unemployment rate has continued to rise. For example, in 2016, the youth unemployment rate among 15-to-29-years old was 9.7%, compared with 3.0% in 2008. In this situation, many adult children not only struggle to get jobs, but also have to remain non-regular work such as temporary, contract, and part-time work (Piotrowski et al. 2015). Moreover, given the rising housing and weddings costs, young adults have to shoulder more economic burdens (Kim, Park and Lee 2016; Lee and Choi 2015). In this overall perspective, today, young people are not able to

achieve the economic or residential independence from their parents, resulting in more difficult economic situation.

Furthermore, parental attitude toward such downward transfers has noticeably changed. Most parents in Korea are willing to take on the responsibility of providing financial support to their children (Lee 2011). Remarkably, the influence of private spending on education is most noticeable in such help provided to children For example, many parents purchase expensive textbooks or learning materials and send their children (aged 6 years or older) to English-language institutions. In addition, Korean parents expend the highest private investment in education in Asia (Cha and Song 2017). The share of private spending on education among households in Korea was 70.5% per month (Korea Statistics, 2017). Through high educational investment, Korean parents are eager to make their children successful; they expect their children to enhance their résumés by attending the best universities and gaining stable job. Due to major socio-economic changes, however, parents continue to provide more financial support to their grown children (Aquilino 2005; Bucx et al. 2012; Fingerman et al. 2012). In the past, most parents expected their children to leave home and achieve financial independence as they entered adulthood. By contrast, parents' continued financial help for young adults has increased. According to the report on Social Survey, Korean parents overwhelmingly believe that they are obligated to provide financial assistance to their young adult children; most parents (98.6%) say they hope to support the cost of tuition for their children. Additionally, nearly 90% of those parents (88.8%) are more likely to pay the weddings costs of their young adult children. Significantly in South Korea, the phenomena of low fertility and the tendency to have just one child correspond to the willingness that most parents to provide strong support for their adult children. In addition, a new group of parents with greater socioeconomic resources is

providing financial support for their young adults for relatively long periods (Fingerman et al. 2015; Swartz, McLaughlin and Mortimer 2017). In this context, many parents often provide financial support for their adult children. About 28.86% of parents who have adult children aged 18 years provided economic support to their children (Chen and Jordan 2018). Almost half of older parents in the Philippines provided resources to non-co-resident children (Agree et al. 2002). In Indonesia, 43.5% of parents with children over the age of 15 years gave their young adult children an average of \$287.13 in the prior 12 months (Frankenberg, Lillard and Willis 2002). Compared to other East Asian countries, Korea is very much like that of the situation. Data from the National Survey on Fertility and Family Health and Welfare in 2015 revealed that 64.4% of parents were providing economic support even after their young adults had graduated from college, and 17% reported that they continued financial assistance as their adult children sought employment. Regarding the exchanges of intergenerational financial support, about 42.3% of parents with unmarried young adults indicated that they were providing economic assistance to their children. The median amount of money given to young adults from their parents was about 600,000 won (approximately \$500). Moreover, 18.4 % of parents were providing financial assistance to married young adults; the average amount of money was about 300,000 won (approximately \$250), according to the 2015 Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families. Clearly, more of today's young adults may need support from their parents than young people in previous generations, and the important dimension of intergenerational relations that has been linked to the transition to adulthood is downward transfers.

The Influence of Downward Transfers on Marriage Timing for Young Adults

Today, young adults who are having economic difficulty tend to postpone their marriage.

Many young adults have experienced changes derived from new social situations; they should stay longer in school because it is difficult for students to obtain jobs due to limited employment opportunities and stable labor market (Aquilino 2005; Piotrowski et al. 2015).

Due to these situations, most of young adults receive financial support from their parents (***). Nonetheless, adult children have trouble reaching to achieve residential and economic independence (***). The numerous studies emphasizing the timing of first marriage suggest that the individuals' economic resources, including the level of education, income, employment, are considered the most important factors (***). Young adults in these circumstances, however, tend to delay their marriage, although parents are willing to provide financial support them.

Previous studies on the influence of the family backgrounds on marriage timing of young adults have shown that parental resources significantly delay the marriage timing of young adults (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Im & Park, 2014; Koh & Auh, 2013; South, 2001; Wiik, 2009). One possible the effects of parental resources in delaying the marriage of adult children can be explained parents' ability to help their children of financial. Parents with higher socio-economic status are likely to invest more resources in their children than those with lower income and education (Kim et al., 2016; South, 2001; ***). Young children with higher financial support from their parents generally stay longer in their parents' home (Wiik, 2009; ***). With better education and/or better occupations, they would continue to look for better career options in terms of position or income thanks to the financial support from their parents. Thus, through financial transfers, parents support for their adult children make a successful transition to adulthood with economic security, so their young adults attain a better

residential independence, thereby receiving more financial support from parents. These intense parental economic supports reinforce parents' marital hoping for their young adults; hence, young children are eager to delay their transition to marriage in order to achieve more stable economic marriage conditions by interacting with their parents (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Kim et al., 2016).

Group differences

As young adult today are faced with socio-economic vulnerability such as higher youth unemployment rates, increased tuition, and the high cost of housing, it also becomes more difficult to gain their residential and achieve economic independence from their parents (***). Consequently, many adults rely on their parents for financial support in order to achieve financially stable life (Kim et al., 2016; Kim, 2015; ***). Parents also provide more economic support to their grown children than parents did in the past (***). However, Parental intense financial support is likely to strongly influence their adults' behavior, such as marriage (Axinn and Thornton, 2009; Kim et al., 2015; Wiik, 2009; ***). Previous research suggests that parental extensive economic assistance is associated with parents' extremely involvement for their children (Willoughby et al, 2013; Fingerman et al., 2012; ***). These parents who are referred to helicopter parenting more concern about the relational decisionmaking process and have a greater wish to enhance the better conditions of marriage about their children's marriage process (Willoughby et al, 2013; Kim et al., 2015; ***). In particular, in Korean cultural norm where young adults children tend to live with their parents until marriage financial transfers from Korean parents to their young adult strongly influence children's marital behavior (***). Therefore, the effect of parental financial support on the timing of their children's marriage could vary depending on the groups. For instance, when it

comes to gender, many previous studies have shown that the association between young adults' economic resources and timing of marriage differ from women and men: unlike women, men who have higher income and regular job are more likely to enter the first marriage (***). Thus, it is more important for men to achieve financial stability than women. However, many young adults have been facing vulnerable economic situations. In this context, although young people receive financial support from their parents, the effect of postponing marriage due to their unstable socioeconomic status seems to be greater for men than for women.

Additionally, the influence of parental financial assistance on their children's marriage may also differ by employment status of young adults. For example, young adults working in non-regular jobs such as contract, temporary, and part-time are especially likely to delay their first marriage due to precarious economic status (Piotrowski et al., 2015), although parents provide financial support for their children. Yet regular jobs enables young adults to achieve financial stability. Furthermore, a higher income or better financial conditions are more likely to lead to make successful transition to adulthood (Min & Choi, 2015). Therefore, those consider not only their spouses but also better economic conditions in marriage choices with their parents (***). During this process, parental intense involvement will influence strongly the process of marriage for their children, and those employed are more likely to delay their marriage, and where parental financial support is available, its effect is likely to be much greater on employed young people than on their unemployed counterparts.

Data and methods

Data

We used the 2007—2016 waves of the Youth Panel (hereafter YP), conducted by the Korea Employment Information Service. The YP is a nationally representative longitudinal survey. This survey, which represents young adults of South Korea aged 15 to 29-years, began in 2007, and in 2016, the Korea Employment Information Service performed the 9th panel survey as a kind of annual follow-up survey. The population comprised young adults' households chosen on the basis of the Occupational Employment Statistics in 2006. The respondents were selected using a double sampling method; the first stage sampled 47,288 adults' households from the Occupational Employment Statistics in 2006; the second stage sampled 12,000 young adults. Through the sampling procedure of face-to-face interviews and computer-aid personal interviewing, the total number of respondents consisted of 10,206 adults in 2007. For the 2007 sample, successive retention rates for follow-up were in 2015 were 71.2% (n=7,022), and details are as follows: (a) retention rates after 1 year in 2008 was 91.2%, 86.5% for 2009, 81.7% for 2010, 78.9% for 2011, 76.8% for 2012, 74.0% for 2013, 73.0% for 2014 and 72% for 2015 and 71.2% for 2016 (Shin et al., 2017).

Our analysis sample was restricted to young adults older than 18 years at the baseline survey of YP in 2007 in that the legal marriage age of South Korea is 18 years, and thus, we defined the age of 18 as the beginning of marriage risk. We examined the analytical sample which consisted of 6,625 respondents who never married and were 18 years old in 2007, and then we followed up their transition to first marriage. Among them, the number of respondents who were right-censored due to drop-out in the survey was 1,961. A total of 3,562 respondents in the sample experienced the transition to first marriage or did not get

married during the observation period. As a result, our final study sample comprised 29,100 espondents, and the data were organized into person-year records.

Measures

The dependent variable was transition pattern to marriage for young adults. We asked the respondents whether they experienced the transition to first marriage in the given year. The variable was coded as a dummy variable (0=unmarried, 1=married). Our study focused mainly on the downward transfers as an independent variable. Respondents were also asked whether they have received financial support from their parents. To those who answered "yes" to the question, an additional question concerning the average amount of monthly support was asked. The downward transfers covered the living cost of young adults, in which the cost of education was not included. In order to measure the amount of money, we created the actual amount of money given to young adults by their parents, using the median of the range of money (350,000 won \= \$314). The actual amount of money was divided into three categories: (a) 0 for not receiving; (b) 1 for receiving of less than 350,000 won; and (c) 2 for receiving of more than 350,000 won.

We included time-invariant control variables for respondents' gender and parental education. Gender was coded as 1 for female and o for male. Parental education was measured by father's educational attainment. The variables were categorized as middle school, high school, two-year college, and higher. Finally, we also constructed time-varying control variables for age, education, living arrangement, employment status, working hours, income, and region. Respondents' age was a linear variable. Education was divided into four categories: high school, two-year college, four-year university, and graduate school. For living arrangement, respondents were asked whether they live with their parents, and the

variable was dichotomized (0=living with parents, 1=living alone). Furthermore, employment status indicated whether the respondents are in school, unemployed, regular work, and others (temporary work, self-employed, and unpaid family worker). Working hours was a linear variable and income was the natural log of monthly income. Finally, the respondents' region was categorized as Seoul metropolitan area, 5 major cities, and other cities.

Method

We analyze the associations between parental financial support and marital timing of their young adults using event-history statistical methods. Table 1 offers descriptions statistics for young adults. Also, we analyze the Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of transition to marriage (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Next, for the Logit models, we examine whether the downward transfers influence young adults' transition to marriage (Table 2).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analysis. The result is based on the person-year records.

Table 1 here

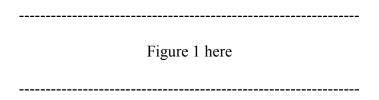
As shown in Table 1, approximately 77.2% of the young adults do not experience transition to first marriage, and only 22.8% enter marriage during the survey period. For living arrangement, most of the young adults live with their parents (69.6%). Additionally, young adults receive financial support from their parents every month; the average amount of

financial help is 370,000 won (≒\$344.4). While about two-thirds of the respondents (75.8%) report that they do not receive financial aid from their parents, 16.9% of them receive a substantial amount of money regularly. The average age of young adults is 27.5 years old, and females represent 57.6% of the sample. Approximately, two-thirds (64.8%) of the young adults graduate from two- or four-year college. Moreover, almost half of the young adults have a regular job. The average working hours is 45.5 per week, and the average income is 1,139,000 won per monthly (≒\$1,060). Most respondents' fathers hold a high school diploma. Finally, only 46.7% of the respondents' fathers have a regular job.

Results

The Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of transition to marriage

To show the change of marriage patterns, we begin with the results from Kaplan-Meier survival estimates of transition to marriage by sex, and employment status. Figure 1 shows that the survival probability, which is relevant to unmarried young adults, differs by gender. For men, the transition to marriage proceeds more steeply than women, and they are more likely to marry much later than women.



As shown in Figure 3, employment status is also concerned with the timing of young adults' marriage. Employed young adults show much lower transition to marriage than those

unemployed. Nevertheless, the relationship between employment status and entering the first marriage is narrowed.

Figure 2 here

Logit regression of the transition to marriage of young adults

Next, we investigate whether the downward transfers influence young adults' transition to marriage. Moreover, we use five models that show the interactions effects between the downward transfers and each group, including sex and employment status, in order to examine whether the effect differs in each group. Model 1 is a basic model, and the remaining models (models 2 to 3) include the interactions of the downward transfers with each group. The results of interactions of each model are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2 here

In Model 1, the downward financial support has a strongly negative effect on young adults' transition to first marriage. The effect of financial assistance on marriage behavior of young adults demonstrates a marked difference; compared with young adults who do not receive financial aid from their parents, those who receive financial support from their parents every month are less likely to enter first marriage. Additionally, young adults who receive an average amount of financial help of less than 350,000 won (≒\$314), experience

much later transition to first marriage than those for whom the average amount exceeds 350,000 won.

Age group has a positive effect on marital formation of young adults. Regarding gender, as is well known from earlier studies, men get married later than women (Blom, 1994; South, 2001). The impact of a high level of education on the transition to first marriage of young adults is positive. For living arrangement, those living with their parents are significantly less likely to experience transition to marriage than those living alone. Compared with young adults with regular jobs, those who are in school and unemployed, and have non-regular jobs are much less likely to enter first marriage. Working hours are negatively related to the transition to first marriage, whereas income is associated with a much likelihood of marriage of young adults. Nevertheless, unlike previous works, it is found that their father's education and employment status do not have a significant effect on young adults' transition to marriage. Finally, regions do not have an effect on the marriage behavior of young adults.

In Model 2, statistically significant gender differences between downward transfers and marriage behavior of young adults are found; those receiving financial support from their parents are less likely to enter marriage than those not receiving it. However, here it is notable that men are less likely to marry than women. Finally, employed young adults are less likely to enter marriage, thereby receiving financial support from their parents.

Conclusion and discussion

We investigate how the downward transfers are associated with young adults' transition to their marriage in South Korea. We also examine whether the associations vary by the young adults' sex and employment status. We use a sample of 29,100 unmarried young adults older than 18 at the baseline from the 2007–2016 waves of the Youth Panel, a nationally representative longitudinal survey of 15 to 29 years young adults.

Financial support from parents has been found to delay the marriage timing of their unmarried adult children. Contrary to the results of previous studies that concluded that higher the level of education and income of parents, the earlier is the marriage timing of their unmarried adult children. Financial support from parents can be interpreted in various ways. Let us consider the difficult situation of young Korean adults in their 20s and 30s. Many of them are struggling financially; they stay longer in school because finding an employment is difficult after graduation. Even when employed, they are still face economic hardships due to the problems of the unstable labor market such as prevalence of temporary employment. This situation is causing more young adults to live with their parents and be financially dependent on them. In other words, the economic hardship of young adults is driving them to their parents for financial support, which in turn delays their marriage timing. The other side of this situation is that the financial support from parents act facilitates young adults in finding better employment conditions or careers. Considering that a marriage is regarded as a union of two families in Korea, it is possible that by providing financial support, parents are joining their children in forming marriages; financial support from parents enables children to pursue better employment opportunities, and thus they are able to marry in better conditions. Alternatively, it allows them to postpone marriage till they find suitable partners. Thus,

financial support from parents acts as a delaying factor in the marriage timing of their children.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	%(Mean)	SD		
Marriage				
Unmarried	77.2			
Married	22.8			
Downward Financial Support				
Not Receiving	75.8			
Receiving less than 350,000 (won)	16.9			
Receiving more than 350,000 (won)	7.3			
	(370,000won)	0.5		
Age	(27.5)	0.0		
Female	57.6			
Education				
High School	31.8			
Two-year College	24.0			
Four-year University	40.8			
Graduate School	3.4			
Living Arrangement				
Living with Parents	69.6			
Living Alone	30.4			
Employment Status				
In School	18.3			
Unemployed	18.3			
Regular Job	52.9			
Others	10.5			
Working Hours	(45.5)			
Income	1,139.3(won)	11.0		
Father's Education	, , ,			
Middle School	19.5			
High School	53.5			
College or Higher	27.1			
Father's Employment Status				
Unemployed	10.3			
Regular Job	46.7			
Others	33.6			
Region				
Metropolitan	51.2			
City	31.8			
Others	17.0			
Number of person-year observations	29,100	0		

Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier Survival Curves of Transition to First Marriage by Gender

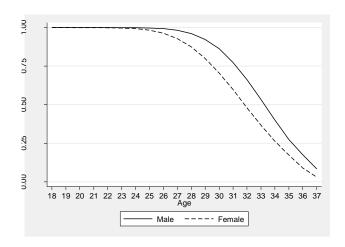


Figure 2. Kaplan-Meier Survival Curves of Transition to First Marriage by Employment Status

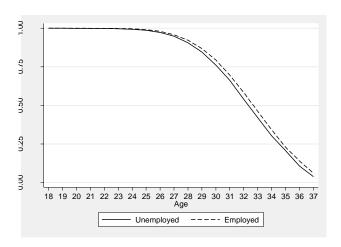


Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis of the Timing of Marriage: 2007–2016

	Model 1			Mo	Model 2			Model 3		
	Co	ef.	S. E.	Coef.		S. E.	Coef		S. E.	
Downward Financial Support(ref: not receiving)										
Downward 1 (less than 350,000 won)	-2.114	***	0.119	-2.870	***	0.271	-2.237	***	0.128	
Downward 2(more than 350,000 won)	-0.707	***	0.093	-2.263	***	0.075	-1.017	***	0.106	
Age Group(ref: 18—23)										
24—28	0.392	***	0.075	0.419	***	0.075	1.395	***	0.075	
29—35	1.648	***	0.076	1.658	***	0.077	1.648	***	0.077	
Female	0.497	***	0.040	0.407	***	0.041	0.480	***	0.040	
Education(ref: high school)										
Two-year College	0.193	***	0.054	0.197	***	0.055	0.192	***	0.055	
Four-year University	0.071		0.052	0.077		0.052	0.072		0.052	
Graduate	0.348	***	0.094	0.350	***	0.094	0.348	***	0.094	
Living Arrangement	2.343	***	0.037	2.333	***	0.037	2.333	***	0.037	
Employment Status(ref: regular job)										
Student	-1.868	***	0.386	-1.913	***	0.386	-1.725	***	0.387	
Unemployed	0.494		0.365	0.423		0.364	0.591		0.366	
Others	-0.144	*	0.062	-0.143	*	0.062	-0.159	*	0.063	
Working Hours (log)	-0.313	***	0.093	-0.331	***	0.093	-0.308	***	0.093	
Income (log)	0.140	***	0.015	0.134	***	0.015	0.140	***	0.015	
Father's Employment Status(ref: unemployed)										
Regular	-0.080		0.047	-0.077		0.047	-0.081		0.047	
Others	-0.056		0.049	-0.055		0.049	-0.057		0.049	
Father's Education(ref: middle)										
High School	-0.127	**	0.046	-0.123	**	0.046	-0.123	**	0.046	
College	-0.149	**	0.056	-0.147	**	0.056	-0.143	*	0.056	
Regions(ref: metropolitan)										
City	-0.011		0.042	-0.003		0.042	-0.011		0.042	
Others	-0.066		0.051	-0.059		0.051	-0.064		0.051	
Downward 1 × Female				0.989	***	0.297				
Downward 2 × Female				1.962	***	0.273				
Downward $1 \times \text{Employment Status}$							0.614		0.349	
Downward 2 × Employment Status							1.581	***	0.237	
Constant		-2.858			-2.736			-2.878		
-2 log likelihood	-9845.431			-9804.046			-9822.109			
Number of person-year observations	29,100			29	29,100					
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^{*} p < .05; ** p < .01, *** p < .05

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