

Richard Haddock:

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Speaker 2:

I'm really excited to introduce our guest for today who is a visiting scholar at George Washington University. She's received her Bachelor's in Arts, in English literature and Chinese literature from Yonsei University in 2003. She has worked as a speech writer for the former President Myung-Bak Lee, at the executive office of the President of South Korea for about three years. She has also worked as Deputy Director of Public Relations, speech writing for the Minister of Press Release and Conferences at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family for the past six years. Before she arrived to the USA, she has a strong interest in advancing social sensitivity among the public to contribute to the reduction of social conflict and violence. Her research focus is on how to use media to promote gender equality in East Asia, especially in South Korea. Welcome to our podcast Eun-Jung Jung. I hope you're having a nice day, and thank you so much for being here today.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Hello. As you said, Eun-Jung Jung from South Korea, and nice to meet you, and thank you for inviting me.

Speaker 2:

Of course. Thank you for your time as well. So, as you're ready to share some valuable insights on the gender issues in South Korea, for our audience today, where does South Korea, stand today with gender equality? Has it evolved from the past?

Eun-Jung Jung:

As both [inaudible 00:02:47] relatively objective gap, and the Gender Gap Index, we call it GGI. It is the world [inaudible 00:02:55] which is released every year and the South Korea ranks 115

out of 149 countries of this year. East Asia's other countries are like China and Japan [inaudible 00:03:09] as low as South Korea. Scandinavian countries are like Iceland, Norway, and Sweden have the smallest Gender Gap Index. Among Asian countries, only the Philippines make it into the top 10. What rank can you guess the United States is based on?

Speaker 2:  
Based on gender inequality you mean, yeah.

Eun-Jung Jung:  
Yeah, yeah. In the index GGI.

Speaker 2:  
I would say top 10?

Eun-Jung Jung:  
Oh, no. [crosstalk 00:03:39] The United States ranked only 51st.

Speaker 2:  
Interesting.

Eun-Jung Jung:  
And Korea scored lowly especially in Economic Participation and Opportunity. And, the other categories are Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. However, GGI doesn't relay complete situation of South Korea due to their various methods of matriculating and measuring. In addition, Korean society has tried doing [inaudible 00:04:13] by quality with a lot of efforts for the last 20 years. For example, male oriented family resisted and was completely opposed about 10 years ago. And with family abortion ban was also abolished in Korea.

Speaker 2:  
Wow.

Eun-Jung Jung:  
Anyway, it is in my opinion, gender equality in South Korea still needs to be improved a lot.

Speaker 2:  
Absolutely, coming from an Asian country, I totally understand this issue. It's prevailing in a lot of countries, so definitely understand it and great. Thank you so much for sharing that with us.

Speaker 2:

So in your opinion, what are the few common misconceptions in the US regarding the South Koreans gender issues?

Eun-Jung Jung:

I think one misconception about, Korea's gender issue in US is that Confucianism is deeply eluded [inaudible 00:05:07] and still powerful in Korean society. It is somewhat true but somewhat untrue. Under which we have Confucian culture South Koreans have very different goals for its gender. Women are expected to raise the children and take care of the house, the home. While the men works to be the main financial supporter of the family. Therefore, there are still a lot of women to choose to stay at after marriage or giving a birth. Many women still tend to be dependent on her husband and family. In addition, females are judged more by their physical appearance rather than their capabilities. In this aspect we can say the stereotype of Korean women is not a misconception. However, the situation has changed very rapidly.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Most Korean young women have undergone and change in their mentality and life. Girls refuse their society's expectations and traditional ideologies. It's one of the main reasons why marriage and birth rates in Korea is decreasing down. The gap between traditional patriarchal culture and women's evolutionary awareness. Those issues is making controversial issue continually. For example, making movements against sexual harassment and sexual assault, [inaudible 00:06:40] Korean Society in 2018 and thousands of young women. [inaudible 00:06:47] and that was shocking and amazing to the older generation.

Speaker 2:

Absolutely. The Me Too movement especially I think revolutionized that on all social media websites from all over the world. So, thank you so much for sharing that with us. So what are some key issues faced by women in South Korea today? For example, I have read previously about employment, pay gaps, social standards. What are some key misconceptions?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Oh yes. Equality and economy is the most urgent and important issue we deal with in South Korea. But to say again if these employment rates and wage gap between men and women in OECD statistics female employment rate in 2018 is around 56.1% in South Korea. On the other hand, the male employment rate is 75.9%. The men is below [inaudible 00:07:54] for all OECD countries, but men is slightly higher than the OECD average. The average in monthly salary for women also was a 64.21% of that paid to men. That's food and part time employment links and

in the clear segregation is making this gap between men and women. When women in the work force have children, they often face social pressure to leave their jobs. Or if they do return to work, they face the future with lower pay. Many are often forced to take irregular work rather than return to full time positions.

Eun-Jung Jung:

The other main issue is a collapsed feeling. Korea's rank in the category of female political activity lacked in behind. In particular, women's role is even more limited at their decision making [inaudible 00:08:51] . Only 2% of South Koreans [inaudible 00:08:54] incorporate both the other directors as female Only 1 in 10 managerial position in South Korea is head by women. In government the concept are similar women only make up 17% of the members that the National Assembly. [inaudible 00:09:13] That's pretty active from the bottom in the OECD.

Speaker 2:

Wow. That's a huge disparity. I also recently read in an article that there's is a 35% pay gap between men and women in South Korea. I really hope that changes in the near future. Why is gender inequality important in the Korean society today?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Gender equality is basically an issue about human rights. In addition, it has more practical reasoning in Korean society. South Korea has developed so fast for the past 50 years after the Korean war. However, it is the time to read the way through new paradigms that you bring Korea to a higher revered economic point. Many studies shows that there are positive relationship between gender diversity in [inaudible 00:10:04] market and corporate companies. Then the diversity in the [inaudible 00:10:09] market. Will help the country or a company between their flexibility and adapting to changing for society and demand. Afraid their policy making process [inaudible 00:10:21] Christine Lagarde the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund that in a conference held in power in 2017, that a rise in the proportion of women in the workforce could boost the GDP by 10% in South Korea. Moreover, South Korea's overall population is expected to begin declining as soon as 2028. South Korea's working age population has already begun declined with the Total Fertility Rate falling below one for the first time in 2019. There's been little protection for our shift to having more children in the near future.

Speaker 2:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Eun-Jung Jung:

Bringing more women into the workplace will be one of the key solutions to prop up the economic growth and government.

Speaker 2:

Absolutely. I also read that especially in the Technology, Artificial Intelligence sector sector, women are not given as much importance as they should be given.

Speaker 2:

I think that would also significantly increase the GDP of South Korea's Economy. Do you have any thoughts about that? Have you [inaudible 00:11:39] any in the technology sector?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Oh, no.

Speaker 2:

It's okay. What measures are being taken by these society government to resolve these prevailing issues?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Contemporary South Korea has great strides in attempting to reduce gender inequality through legislation and policy making. First of all, government tried to support working women. Many career driven women which are also doing, they have a baby or they have to go back to work after the maternity leave to increase the women to continue working. The government is striving to create a women friendly environment both at home and work. The Korean government has taken steps to extend paid paternal leave.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Ensured for both parents to take the leaves at the same time. And created incentive for companies to allow both parents to work reduced hours. And that's not all he confessed to expand the after school care. Why? Reducing the maximum hours worked in a week to 52 hours we'll have working mothers. Secondly, the government has to reduce the gender gap in government. It has been modest to coerce women accounting for with 10% in government position and 20% of public company executives by 2022. On the other hand, as I mentioned ahead, there is a huge gap between a traditional culture and young generation mentality about gender role. I think media has the most important key to resolve this problem. The entertainment industry life who is to [inaudible 00:13:35] is different gender roles of females and

males, typically conveying certain characteristics, and they are expected to behave in a sexual way to be [inaudible 00:13:47] as female or male.

Eun-Jung Jung:

It's come past the male to bear more responsibilities or to conduct their behavior in certain way.

Eun-Jung Jung:

If they were times that protected the public in South Korea. Media and entertainment industry have to change and take responsibility. They have to go out from the stereotypes then promote to policies and official for both men and women.

Speaker 2:

I think just more things like giving extended parental leave when the mom gives birth so that both of them can be contribute makes a huge difference. I think a lot of it is also about to do with just spreading awareness and tweaking the policies. But thank you for sharing all these really relevant points for us. So as an expert in this field, what resources would you suggest for different teachers to use in their classroom on this topic? [inaudible 00:14:47].

Eun-Jung Jung:

Thankfully, I watched a Netflix documentary titled "Why Women Are Paid Less" which explains in the gap across the world. I think it shows the various kinds of statistics and ethics about gender gap and that's the key stuff.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Narrowing the gap in some countries. I believe that this kind of documentary contents to have students understand the gender issue reason.

Eun-Jung Jung:

And, I'd like to command, the official website of IMF to find information about gender and economy. On the West side. One of the key issue is gender. You can see many infographic video clips and report about gender and command. And, if you want a content to show feminist trend in Korea, I've uploaded a new video clip on YouTube. "How Feminist in South Korea is a Way for Me Too", which was made by Quartz News. It might be helpful to understand Korean young women talking [inaudible 00:15:55] towards gender equality.

Speaker 2:

[inaudible 00:15:58] sources that you just mentioned, especially the international organizations working towards all of these issues. I think they all need to have a lot of content on their

website. We have. Thank you for telling our audience, guiding them in the right direction, to go for these resources.

Speaker 2:

Okay, so with K-Pop being a growing international phenomena. What are some gender related issues in the K-pop industry.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Nowadays? K-pop is profitable? Why? I think most of the K-Pop girl groups that does away their sexuality and appearance to keep their beauty. I'm worried that they have affected some teenagers' gender perspectives. They need to have more variety and diversity. And unfortunately, there were a big scandal related to a famous K-Pop star. They even took a spy camera video [inaudible 00:17:04] woman's naked body. The problem is that this is not the unusual things for Korean men. This can't really shows how Korean men would get women. I think the K-Pop star related to the scandal has to be punished strictly and just have to give a messages to all the people what they do is [inaudible 00:17:37] not fine.

Speaker 2:

Interesting. I've seen as actually happening in a lot of countries globally as well, especially if the spy cam when you are changing clothes in a shopping mall. Or just man taking advantage even in older these days. I think there are so many spy camera that take advantage. So do you think this has more to do with the men appearance and them being accepted in the society or men be more attracted to these women? No. Any thoughts? Even sharing thoughts about it? These women are being objectified in the entertainment industry. Do you think women are liking it? Is it an acceptance for them, being accepted in the industry?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Mmm. Yeah. Very interesting except what people want and what people want to see.

Speaker 2:

I think from where I come from, we have a very popular industry as well.

Speaker 2:

Where the women are mostly objectified in the movies or even in songs. So, I think this issue is definitely concern globally, and I hope it changes someday soon.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Yeah, I hope so.

Speaker 2:

Thank you. As you're coming to the end of the podcast, do you have any final words or comments or suggestions for the audience listening to our podcast?

Eun-Jung Jung:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). It is that not that South Korea is not so developed concerning gender equality. My country under dramatic changing [inaudible 00:19:30] eliminate the gender discriminations. I hope teachers have a drift on gender issue and their advancements in South Korea.

Speaker 2:

Absolutely. Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and responses. I'm sure the audience will enjoy this episode, and it will definitely serve as a great resource for our teachers as well students who are learning more about a gender issue in South Korea. Thank you so much for being here with us today.

Eun-Jung Jung:

Thank you.

Richard Haddock:

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