

## **Lifestyle Changes among Korean Youth**

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I would like to present a brief description of what I feel about lifestyles of many Korean youth.

When people of my generation (the 368 generation\*) were young, we used to live in a lodging house and cook our own meals when attending university or going to work. Living under one roof with other lodgers, we learned to be polite to each other so that each of us could live a comfortable life.

Young people today, however, rent a one-room apartment and live alone, which makes me feel that they put more focus on securing their private life. Also, as a result of the rapid spread of mobile phones and the internet, today's youth almost always have a smart-phone in their hands. Many young people are absorbed in the virtual world of the internet, bringing remarkable changes to various forms of communication with others. Moreover, it seems to me that young people strongly hope for a life that emphasizes their individuality, rather than a life that focuses on warm ties with others.

Regarding gender role division, Korean society has long been strongly influenced by Confucian philosophy, which is characterized by its male-oriented views. In terms of relationships between men and women, there are the following stereotypes:

- A man and a woman should get married when they reach a certain age.
- If they decide to get married, the man should prepare the house. At the same time, woman should prepare the household electric appliances, bedclothes, tableware and other items necessary for their new life together.
- While the man must support the family, the woman must perform household chores for the family.
- While the man must be decisive and placid, the woman must be feminine and careful.

Although some of the above ideas steadfastly remain in Korean society, many are also gradually changing in recent years. First, there is no absolute need to get married, with cases of men and women working together to save money for their marriage and house. Also, not only men are responsible nowadays for supporting the family. Hoping that

women can find a job and participate more in society, many more young couples are sharing household chores. Moreover, many women once wanted their partner to achieve social success and to be dependable. Certainly, many women today hope so as well, but they also want their partner to be more caring and family-oriented. Furthermore, women also want to be loyal to their family and enjoy their own social success.

In my case, for example, I am trying to strike a balance between my career and child-rearing. Although my husband helps me with household chores, I think I will still end up doing about 70% of all the chores. Like my case, even though many more women participate in society and many more men share household chores with their partners, in reality women still have to bear a heavy burden. Nevertheless, compared with Korean society in the past, Confucianism-based values are gradually changing. I think that Korea is slowly transforming into a gender-equal society.

\* 368 generation: those born in the 1960s and who spent their school days in the 1980s