TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Vol. 11, 2020

A new decade for social changes

www.techniumscience.com

ISSN 2668-7798

9 772668 779000

Fairness in Korean Society: Assessing the Perspective of Millennials

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Abstract. This study aims to evaluate the recent "Fairness" related issues in South Korea in the perspectives of the Millennials. In contrast to the X generation, the Millennials are living through the hardest period of Korea with the difficulty of accumulating wealth, high unemployment, and tough social mobility. The challenges in the country led more millennials to lean on a fairer society and to support the current administration, the Moon Administration. However, "Fairness" issues are arising continuously and the response to those issues vary, depending on the typical factors. By analyzing three recent issues-Cho Kuk Incident, ICN Incident, and the Yonsei Incident- the paper analyzes the selective rage of the Millennials. The level of rage is tied to the social, political status of the figure and the direct connection to employment. The policymakers and the X generations emphasize the importance of a fair society while they are not willing to give up their shares of the pie. To avoid having a "lost decade" like Japan, slowing down in social and economic development, Korea should find a practical solution or else the Millennials will be living through the toughest generation of Korea.

Keywords. Social Fairness, Selective Rage, Republic of Korea, Millennials, Rage, Social Mobility, Youth Unemployment, Political Consciousness, Cho-Kuk Incident, ICN Incident, Yonsei Incident

1. Introduction

South Korean (hereafter Korea) society is fearing an escalating crisis. Dubbed the "Miracle of the Han," from the end of the Korean War in 1953 when it was an impoverished nation, Korea experienced drastic economic development leading to its membership in the OECD and the group of G20 countries. As of 2019, Korea is ranked the 12th largest economy in the world. Universal education has been achieved faster and more widely than any other country, and it also shows a new aspect of social development under a social policy, including free childcare and school meals. However, during the process, small problems stacked, and in 1997, a devastating financial crisis struck Korea leading to the largest IMF bailout package up to that time. From then, the social, economic situation of Korea changed. The middle class started to shrink, wealth polarization became more severe, and unfairness issues began to rise. People began to feel that a solution was needed, but the seriousness of the matters deepened as time passed.

The development of social capital is an important precondition for the healthy development of a society. In a community with high social capital, individuals can properly exercise their activities with efficiency based on the smoothly operated social norms and systems (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman. 1988). Among various factors of social capital, fairness is

an essential factor. People would be more satisfied with policies and agree to the results in a fair society. Social Exchange Theory states when the output does not equal the input, people feel unfair (Colquitt et al. 2001). The biggest complaint in Korean Society today is “unfairness.” In the same situation, different standards apply to give some people benefits while taking away others’ seats.

More than the X generation (born between 1965-1980), the Millennials (born between 1981-1996) are easily exposed to the deterioration of social progress and are facing significant challenges in terms of living. A new social environment, where job security, employment conditions, and normative normality in intimacy, enjoyed by the X generations, is not present for Millennials. The sudden rise of the acronym “N Po Generation,” meaning giving up N number of factors (i.e. date, marriage, and birth) to invest in a better future, reflects the hardship. The long-believed path of academic-employment broke down, and most are taking time before the employment stage due to failing to find a job. As this became common, the youth decided to give up some things, enjoyed by the X generations, from their life.

“Because I hate Korea” is a non-fiction novel written by Jang Gang-Myeon in 2015, and a lot of people in the 20s and 30s empathized with it. The main character, “Gyena,” left Korea to Australia as she can no longer live in a society where she feels like a loser. Calling the Korean Society “Hell,” as Gyena does in the book, reflects the “Hell Joseon Syndrome.” The term “Hell Joseon” has been widely spoken in recent years in describing the Korean society. The lowest birth rate produced by a ‘denying’ society, the highest elderly poverty rate, and the suicide rate are embedded in the phrase “Hell Joseon” (OECD 2015). In a society where, young people who design and dream of the future have disappeared, it is difficult for innovative changes or progress to be made. Currently, young Koreans are in a situation where the socioeconomic foundation that can reasonably plan for a distant future has collapsed.

“Opportunities should be equal, processes should be fair, and results should be just” appeared as a slogan at the 2017 Korea Presidential Election after the impeachment of President Park. This slogan was treated as a sign of hope to the people depressed and tired after the “Candlelight Protest.” People desired a new, fair society, and as a result, president Moon was elected. However, “fairness” issues started to arise from the start of the presidency. The continuous subject regarding fairness calls attention to the problem, especially how the distinct age group, the Millennials, are accepting and reacting to it. It is crucial to analyze fairness, the social problem that violates the principles of justice, and can hinder sustainable growth in Korean society from Millennials’ perspective. Three main fairness issues-Cho-Kuk Incident, ICN Part-Time to full-time Job conversion, and the Yonsei Graduate School Incident- will be analyzed to identify the factors that fuel the grievances of Millennials.

2. Theories of fairness and equality

Fairness was mentioned starting from ancient Greece Philosophers, and was developed by Adams in 1965 and Homans in 1961 as “Equity Theory.” The theory concentrates on the two mechanisms, “Social exchange Theory” and “Relative Deprivation Theory.” The Social Exchange Theory states fairness differs by the output received related to the input. The Relative Deprivation Theory states fairness affects people differently from the comparison of the production of others. The early fairness theory pointed out that fairness was not based on absolute criteria, but rather a concept perceived through relative comparisons (Greenburg,1990). Individuals experience strong dissatisfaction or conflict when placed in a “negative unfair state” where the output is less than others. However, they have a lower level of awareness of unfairness in the case of “positive unfairness” where they have more output than others (Austin,1974).

Turner (1986) states in his “Social Identity Theory,” all humans are equal in their natural state. Fairness of opportunity means individuals are not discriminated against by factors that cannot be chosen, such as race, class, religion, or family. The process of opportunity can only be achieved by providing substantially equal opportunities beyond giving all individuals an equal formal opportunity. For fairness in the opportunity to be realized, the “rule of game,” when an individual can be given a fair chance regardless of the discriminatory conditions inherent in the process of opportunity, should be the basis.

Rawls (1971) claimed equality as an essential factor for a just society. The view of equality can be divided into input centers and output centers, where input means goods and yield mean utility. Utility-oriented equality is an epigenetic view based on utilitarianism, and Resource-oriented equality comes from Rawls' criticism of the hedonistic service. Sen (1980) refutes both of these claims. Sen criticizes Utility-Oriented quality, citing the fact that individual utility can change continuously through the adaptation process. One example is when first encountering a high-quality dish the experience may be high, but after getting used to it, the sense of difference is similar to before. For Rawls' Resource-oriented equality, criticisms are made due to the differences in individual and social capabilities that can change what the same resource can do with it. It's the "what" we can do with resources, not the resources themselves.

3. Millennials in the context of a precarious economy

The drastic development of Korea in the 1960s and the 1970s was a result of collectivist culture. However, after the financial crisis of 1997 and the subsequent IMF bailout, collectivism gave way to individualism. Song (2003) notes four contested features of Korean society: the ideal of egalitarianism, selfish individualism, familism, and nepotism. Korea's individualism is unique compared to other cultures. It shows collectivism in some situations, especially within families, but mostly shows immature individualism features. Koreans indicate a lower level of self-determination than Japan or China, as well as European countries (Yeon.2011). In psychological terms, individualism in Korea is still under parental dependence.

Lee (2018) focused on Millennials, or what he calls the “Echo Generation” (born after the 1980s), to study the cause of this new behavior. Statistics show after 1982, married women give birth to less than two children, and in 2000, the fertility rate dropped to about one child. This means that the youth today under 35 years old has one or fewer siblings. As the number of working couples dramatically increased since 1980, Lee (2018) assumes that Millennials spent a lot of time alone. Although Millennials have been characterized as individualistic, it's important to remember the highly stratified context they are living in.

3.1. Lack of Job Opportunity

The 2008 World Financial Crisis led by the 2007 Subprime Mortgage Crisis entrenched a low economic growth rate in line with the aging population, which resulted in a high unemployment rate. Although the average education level of the young generation of Korea is the highest in history, they face great difficulties in today's labor market. Their transition to the labor market is disturbed by the long list of ‘Specs’ (Job Requirements) and a small number of jobs available for the entry stage of a career. The limited entry to the labor market made the prestigious young Koreans compete more fiercely to secure a better job (Kim, Hyung-A. 2015).

Compared to Japan, a neighboring country of Korea that shares a similar society, the severity of Korea's unemployment situation is highlighted. The Youth Unemployment of Japan was 7.1% in 2010 higher than in Korea (6.9%). But in 2017, the unemployment rate in Japan dropped to 4.1% while the rate for South Korea increased to 9.8%.

Figure 1: Youth Unemployment Rate (Youth Aged 15-29)

A. Source: Statistics Korea (2020)

B. 2020 is until June

The Korean youth grew up experiencing the hardships of their parents with their job stability during the 1997 Korean IMF Bailout and the 2007-8 World Financial Crisis. Hence, they tend to prioritize the safety of the job with the least possibility of being dismissed. This tendency led to professional jobs, including doctors and lawyers, and stable employment as public officials becoming more popular. 249,700 people applied to the “2020 Class 9 Civil Servant Exam” for an available space of 23,709, showing a competition rate of 10:1. The top college students want to go to medical and dental school. Seoul National University Engineering School, one of the best colleges in Korea, had 100 students who canceled their admission in 2018. For over ten years, no one withdrew their admission for Medical School.

3.2. Difficulty in Accumulating Wealth

“Please do not take away the happiness and dreams I had in Korea for the first time” is the title of the National Petition (National Petition, 27-12-2017) against the government’s new cryptocurrency policy, ranked as a hot issue today. The writer illustrated how he was thrilled for the expectation of a change in society when voting for President Moon. However, he is still living in a reality of fearing to turn on the air conditioner in the Summer. Bitsum, the largest virtual asset service provider, reported (2018) 60% of the users are people in the 20s and 30s. In 2017, 30% of the world’s cryptocurrency transactions were made in Korea (KDI Research Center). Investing in real-estate and earning interest through savings accounts offering high rates were common methods by which earlier generations accumulated wealth.

The recent saturation of real estate markets has made it difficult for youth to build wealth through this traditional method. Similarly, governed by the Bank of Korea, the interest rate for saving accounts was 16.2% in 1981. The interest rate is 0.5% as of May 2020. In short, the dominant ways of accumulating wealth are no longer available to today's youth. Given this situation, Millennials sought alternative strategies. Cryptocurrency, they believed, was one of the few available methods to invest and earn money. The petition against the government's regulation of the cryptocurrency industry reflects the overall frustrations youth feel when attempting to build wealth.

The average X generation started accumulating wealth from leasing a small house and moving to a bigger or a better-located house by securing a mortgage loan from the bank. This was the typical path, and one of the best investment methods in line with the price of real-estate continuously increasing. The Bank of Korea, the central bank of Korea, reported in its National Balance Sheet in 2018, the assets of each house increased 4.1% compared to the previous year. This resulted from the drastic increase in the real estate price as they counted as 75.4% of the households' net assets in 2018. The OECD report reveals the real estate percentage of the net asset of other developed nations, which showed a much lower number than Korea. The U.S was 34.8%, Japan was 43.3%, and Canada was 57%.

However, the situation is different for Millennials. From the start, they have to deal with the high real estate prices and face enormous challenges to buy a house. The average sales price of an apartment in Seoul is 925.9 Million Korean Won (About 0.77 Million USD) reported by the KB Kookmin Bank in its 2020 report. The Price to Income Rate (PIR) is 11.7, which infers an average person should save all of his or her earnings without spending 12 years to buy a house in Seoul. The 2020 'New handling amount of mortgage loans by commercial banks over the last two years' released by the Financial Supervisory Service reveals the individuals in their 30s account for 43% of the total mortgage loan. This situation is the result of fearing they could never buy a house observing the skyrocketing price of the real estate.

Rising interest in the lifestyle of "YOLO" (short for "You Only Live Once"), "Small but Definite Happiness (*Sohwakhaeng*), and COSPA (Cost+Performance) is a result of this situation. Instead of working hard all their life to buy a house, the youth turned their path to a "Work-Life Balance" lifestyle (Yoo HongJun, Shin InChul, Jung TaeIn. 2018).

3.3. Social Mobility

Korea was generally believed to be a high mobility society. It has worked as a psychological mechanism supporting the massive economic development, and a buffer mechanism that alleviates social discontent raised by inequality (Bar-Haim.2018: 501). However, the 2015 report of Statistics Korea notes a 21% increase in feedback compared to the survey held in 2006, questioning the possibility of going up the social ladder. 95% of the people answered that the inheritance hierarchy in our society is severe.

Known as the "The Spoon Theory," it is a crucial perception among the Millennials that it is no longer possible to rise in the social hierarchy by only individual efforts. A recent survey on part-time youth workers reveals "Gold Spoon (Keumsoojeo) and Dirt Spoon (Heuksoojeo)" as the most undesirable phrases (JoongAng Ilbo, 02-06-2017). The depression the youth are feeling about social inequality is reflected in these ideas. The frustration can be seen in the increasing number of people who have negative attitudes about social mobility. The percentage of people above 19 years old who believe social mobility in Korea is hard was 46.7% in 2006, 58.1% in 2009, and 65% in 2017 (Statistics Korea. 2017).

Some studies show the social mobility of Korea is not as challenging as people feel. The research conducted through Markov process simulation by Park Jae Wan using the Korea Labor

Panel Survey and the Financial Panel Survey, an analysis of the estimated annual shift in the base income bracket, shows that the class movement is active (Park,Jae-Wan. 2017). However, as most studies take to count income equality and the income class as the main factor, they do not fully reflect the social situation-youth unemployment, academic background, social status, and social capital should be analyzed evenly. A recent study shows the more affluent the economic upbringing environment in childhood was, the more pessimistic the shift of one's class was compared to the current generation of parents and the possibility of moving one's children to a higher class. Also, respondents who are currently economically vulnerable were negatively assessed as having a lower class than their parents' generation (Park Sun-Kyung, Lee Nae-Young. 2019). Due to continuous fairness related issues, the young generation is desiring for a fair society rather than economic development.

4. The evolving worldview of Millenials

4.1. Rising Distrust on Fairness

8 out of 10 Koreans question the fairness of their society. The majority of Millennials believe it is unfair but given relative deprivation discussed above, the 67.8% (KOSIS.2019) of youth who attend college may be particularly frustrated by the challenges they face. This is a scope condition and thus the analysis below focuses on this group who may have higher but frustrated aspirations, thus contributing to the grievances they bear. A global data analysis group, Nielsen Korea, surveyed 1,000 Koreans from age 19-70, and 83.8% from the age group of 19-20, replied the Korean Society is not fair. Macromill Embrain, a research company in Korea, questioned 1,000 college students from three countries (Korea, China, Japan, and the United States) to check college students' perceptions of the success factors of youth. Unlike the other three nations which had Talent and Effort as the highest factor, college students in Korea chose the wealth of the parent (50.5%) as the most critical factor for success. In this situation, the millennials of Korea desire a society where the effort they put in is rewarded. Hence, they tend to prefer taking a test is objectively evaluated rather than a subjective review where peripheral cues may influence grader scores.

4.2. Political Consciousness of the Millennials

The low voter turnout in elections by Koreans in their 20s has always been controversial since 2000. For a long time, the older generations criticized the de-politicization of the people in their 20s. The low voter turnout rate indirectly showed how the specific age group was the least active. The last three consecutive presidential elections in <Table 1> reflects the political participation of each age group.

Table 1: 17th,18th,19th Presidential Election Voter Turnout by Age group

(Unit: %)	The 20s	The 30s	The 40s	The 50s	Over 60
2017 19th Presidential Election	76.1	74.2	74.9	78.6	79.1
2012 18th Presidential Election	68.5	70.0	75.6	82	80.9
2007 17th Presidential Election	46.6	55.1	66.3	76.6	76.4

Source: National Election Commission (2020)

The Table portrays a drastic increase from the 17th Presidential Election to the 19th Presidential election. The observable change was due to the "Candlelight Protest" from 2008

against U.S beef imports to the 2016 President Park impeachment, which reflects the peak. The candlelight vigil at the end of October 2016 of the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye led to a new chapter in Korean Politics (Oh. 2020). In a cold winter, hundreds, thousands of citizens of Korea rose to reform the Democracy in Korea the start of the whole process of the Impeachment of President Park was due to Jung Yu-Ra being privileged compared to others regarding the school treatment. The youth wanted a change, and it happened. Hence, the 19th Presidential Election had the highest participation from young adults in their 20s in history. This may be motivated by the anger they feel toward the Korean Government and the expectations of a better society. The change in the voting rate reflects the hopes pinned to the current government, which many assumed to be different than before. Consequently, the rage that Millennials feel may be accentuated by these elevated hopes

5. Events facilitating millennial rage

5.1. The Cho Kuk Incident

On Oct. 12, 2019, thousands of college students held a second rally in Daehak-ro, Seoul, calling for the resignation of Minister Cho. On the same day, a coalition of 36 university student councils held a forum to vent their anger, calling the country's crisis a matter of justice and fairness, not an ideology. The president of the student council of Seoul National University, who appeared at the forum, said, "I am angry that the Minister of Justice, who should be strict in law and justice, made good use of the loopholes in the law," and that "expectations for the regime that advocated progress have collapsed."

The "Cho-Kuk Incident" brought chaos to Korean Society, and the consequences were left unsolved after the resignation of Minister Cho. Minister Cho is seen as one of the most powerful people in the Moon Administration, previously serving as the Senior Secretary for Civil Affairs. People have not doubted the appointment of Cho Kuk as a Minister of Justice until the truth was revealed during the hearing. The Janus characteristics of Cho Kuk were shown. The previous image of being full of justice and reform and pursuing a fair society hid the true nature of Cho.

College students claim the value of "fairness of opportunity," was destroyed by the family of Minister Cho. He created fake citations and false internships for his daughter to get her into prestigious universities and graduate schools. While average or low-income college students struggle with part-time jobs, Minister Cho's daughter received a scholarship that she did not apply for. Minister Cho, who said, "Live as a carp, frog, and lobster, not a dragon," made his children take the "Dragon Course" by using all kinds of unfair tactics. Nevertheless, the Moon administration, which pretended to be the incarnation of justice, is trying to cover up corruption by obstructing the prosecution's investigation. Fortunately, the younger generation has come to know the 586 people (people now in the 50s went to school in the 80s and were born in the 60s, who participated in the democratic movement before) and the true nature of its regime, which has long deceived them with rhetoric. If the most popular terms for those in their 20s in 2015 were the "Spoon class theory" and "Hell Joseon," this crisis became an opportunity for the entire society to recognize the reality of the "low-income class."

Despite the fact that the controversy surrounding the Ungdong Academy (owned by the Cho family) and private equity funds were much more severe in some ways than the scandal involving children's illegal admission, the reason why they gathered public interest was that they eventually stimulated such "original feelings." The Park Administration's failure demonstrated to billions how an individual's ignorance and selfishness would be evil in the country. Above all, people realized true democracy would succeed if people elect the president and the National Assembly members with their own hands, increasing their political interests.

The Cho Kuk Incident was a betrayal to the Koreans, especially the Millennials, who believed the Moon Administration would make society fairer.

5.2. Incheon Airport (hereafter ICN) Part-Time to Full-Time Job Conversion

On June 22, 2020, Incheon International Airport Corp. announced a plan to directly hire 1,902 security search agents as "civil police officers." This policy has drawn a massive backlash from mainly young people. As of July 10, the number of people who agreed to the Blue House petition to stop the regularization of non-regular workers at Incheon International Airport surpassed 300,000 in the first two weeks of the petition. In particular, job seekers showed extreme rejection. Incheon Airport Corporation's policy to stabilize these workers was seen as an attempt to steal their future jobs, which they are preparing by staying up all night.

On June 29, polling agency RealMeter surveyed 500 adult men and women on the policy of converting workers of public institutions to full-time positions. 45.0% of the respondents said that the transition to regular workers should be postponed considering the consequences of reverse discrimination, and 40.2% said that the transition to ordinary workers should be continued to change the long-term employment system. Among those in their 20s, 55.9 percent said the transition to regular positions should be put on hold, with the highest opposition among all age groups.

The main characters of the ICN Incident, the security guards, are initially employees of a subsidiary company. Within the company, they have all have met minimum education requirements and are not part-time workers hired quickly from apps such as "Albamon" (a platform that connects employers to employees). However, the stereotype that they are part-time workers who acquired their jobs easily went viral online which, in turn, outraged Millennials. However, regardless of the security workers' employment process, Millennials resented the fact that their conversion to regular workers potentially would decrease opportunities in the next open recruitment period.

Millennials confirmed, planned, proved, and recognized their existence as they passed the exams. Following the continuous mid-term and final exams taken every semester during school years, he or she will go to college through the College Scholastic Ability Test to wrap the 12-year term. After receiving an evaluation through repeated tests, they enter society through the gateway of employment. Recently, however, this series of trends in Korean culture has been cut off. The "disappearance" of the job test, which is called the gateway to social advancement, has encouraged young people's impatience, and the ICN Incident has served as an opportunity for the youth to vent their anxiety and discontent overall. In Korea, the system of testing has served as a measure of fairness in society. Therefore, the younger generation continues to challenge the public notice despite the rare acceptance rate of dozens and hundreds of jobs because of the expectation of fair competition and compensation that selection will bring.

Fairness is the last hope for young people. Being angry and sensitive reflects the anxiety they are experiencing. This generation has been trying to survive the competition created by the world as soon as they were born. If fairness is not recognized, it is as if their lifelong efforts, sacrifices, lives, and everything will be wasted. Regardless of the effort, the young Koreans can't expect a stable life. This led them to become very obsessed with "compensating for his or her efforts." From this point of view, the desire of non-regular workers to become regular workers is a very unfair idea- an unacceptable attempt to achieve good results without effort. The irregular workers immediately becoming regular workers bothers the Millennials who are putting full effort into getting employed, making them feel anger beyond deprivation.

The anger of the Millennials is legitimate. They are not angry at the cause of the transition of non-regular workers to full-time positions but question whether the regularization has been made fair and just. The zero-sum mindset implies when the non-regular workers, who have not gone through the normal employment process of ICN, get easily transitioned to full-time work, then there will be less room for them to enter open recruitment. Young people are aware that expressing anger and hatred toward irregular workers who turn into regular workers does not solve the problem, but the labor market environment, which lacks quality jobs, is the essence of the problem. Until now, however, our society has delivered a message to young people: "The size of the pie to share will increase," but it is not working in reality. Young people are outraged over the state of national growth and are questioning society.

The government is promoting its new big goal of improving the working environment through the "regularization of non-regular workers," starting from the Incheon International Airport. However, it failed to present to the young Koreans a concrete blueprint for making more quality jobs other than the Incheon International Airport. The uncertainty of the government is growing the concern that the transition to regular workers will reduce employment in the future. In other words, young people are not asking to prevent irregular workers from becoming regular workers, but to present a universal rule that says the government will create quality jobs in the future. In addition, the government's behavior of ordering public institutions to switch the status of the irregular workers to regular for "consideration" while passing on financial responsibilities to each institution and local government has also become a structural background for young people to lose confidence in the policy.

Deep skepticism about the "fairness" associated with life are commonly shown in the people outraged at the incident. The continuous issues of corruption from the Cho Kuk incident, the Millennial believes the "Spoon class theory" acts as a reality that dominates their life and distorts reality.

5.3. Yonsei Graduate School Incident

According to the Ministry of Education's "Comprehensive Audit Results of Yonsei University" on July 14, 2020, professors at Yonsei business school manipulated scores in document screening and oral tests to pass Lee's (the former Vice President of Yonsei) daughter in April 2016, when Lee was in office. The six professors on the evaluation committee held prior consultations with the chief professor. They raised the daughter of Lee, who was ninth in the quantitative evaluation, to fifth in the document screening process, giving her a chance to take an oral test. Professors of the evaluation committee later gave the daughter of Lee a perfect score of 100 points on the oral examination. They unfairly underestimated the oral test scores of two applicants who passed the document screening process by 47 points and 63 points (top scorers). In the end, Lee's daughter was finally accepted as a graduate student. Lee's daughter enjoyed the "parent chance" of using the authority of her father, the school's vice president at Yonsei University. The Education Ministry asked the prosecution to investigate professors involved in the unfair selection of graduate school freshmen on charges of obstruction of business.

However, this incident has not been an issue for the public nor the younger generation. Despite the blatant denial of the fairness of the graduate school entrance exam, it did not attract social attention. In a way, it was a case where fairness was inherently worse than the incident of Cho Kuk's daughter, but it became less socially controversial than the case of Cho Kuk and other college admissions irregularities. There were no collective protests such as candlelight vigils, and it is hard to find any controversy among young people on various online portals or

social networking sites. The following article on Naver, Korea's largest portal site, shows the situation. "College students, who have been making a fuss about Cho Kuk's daughter's internship at Seoul National University are openly against the daughter of Yonsei University's vice president?" The Millennials are showing a selective rage on fairness, and the issues related to certain factors disturb them.

6. Selective rage

The social interest surrounding the three main events reflects the key factors that make the Millennials rage regarding fairness. Fairness is relative, and for some issues, not much rage is shown. Through DataLab on Naver, Korea's largest portal site, the social interest in events was analyzed. "Most Searched Keyword" in the Keyword search database on Naver was used to search keywords related to "Admission to Yonsei University" and "Daughter of the vice president of Yonsei." No keywords related to the issue was ranked on the "Trending keyword (Silsigan geomsaego)" from July 14-17 (when the incident occurred and was revealed). However, related to Cho Kuk's daughter's admission, the keyword related to it has stayed for several days. The keyword Cho-Min, Cho Kuk's daughter, was ranked second on October 15, 2019. Furthermore, on the same day, "Cho-Kuk Resign" was listed as the most trending keyword. Keywords including "Cho-Kuk," "Cho Min," and "Cho-Kuk Resign" have also ranked inside the top 10 trending keywords for consecutive days.

It is important to note that the Cho-Kuk incident is likely to spark wide interest as he was a prominent politician who held highly visible positions in the current President's cabinet. The Yonsei incident, while touching a sensitive chord amongst students and families struggling in a hyper-competitive educational context, is at the end a local issue that is relevant for particular subpopulations. The two incidents are both related to the admission of the children. But the public interest in the issue is different. This can be interpreted as follows: In Korean society, academic backgrounds are 'identity' and 'capital.' Social discrimination based on educational experience and discrimination in working conditions results in an infinite demand for university education. Under this structure, everyone is forced to go to college. The primary problem is the wage gap based on academic background. In 2009, the Ministry of Employment and Labor reported a "work status survey by employment type." It revealed the average yearly wage of the aged 25-29 age group based on their final level of education- Middle School Graduates and under: 8,970,000 Korean Won, Junior College Graduates: 10,340,000 Won, College Graduates: 12,420,000 Won.

However, wages between 55 and 59 years old are 13,670,000 Won for Junior college graduates and 22,260,000 Won for college graduates, widening the gap with high school graduates. According to the difference in working hours by academic background, when the working hours of high school graduates were set at 100, it was 103.6 for middle school graduates, 94 for community college graduates, and 89.1 for college graduates and above. Even though college graduates work 10 percent fewer hours than high school graduates, their wages are up to 2.2 times higher. This adds to the "academic premium." According to a paper titled "Changes in the Wage Gap between College Graduates in Korea between 1999 and 2008," as of 2008, the top 13 university graduates were paid 14.2 percent more than those in 14th and 50th places, 23.2 percent more than those in 51st places, and 42 percent more than those who graduated from junior colleges (Ko,Eun-Mi, 2011). In 1999, the wage gap between the top 13 universities and 14th to 50th-ranked university graduates was only 1 percent. The "academic premium" has become much more substantial in nine years.

Therefore, going to the top-tier universities is not only advantageous for getting a job but once one gets a job, he or she can enjoy a more substantial "academic premium." For this

reason, college students in their twenties are more sensitive to school hierarchy than in the past. They divide grades in schools, but they also divide classes according to departments in schools. This new tracking pedagogy is called 'academic hierarchicalism' (Oh, Chan-Ho, 2013). Therefore, going to top-tier universities is an excellent way to get a good job and gain the upper hand after that. According to the employment statistics of graduates of higher education institutions released by the Ministry of Education in 2018, the employment rate of college graduates is the highest at 83.3 percent in the medical sector and the lowest in the humanities at 57.1 percent. According to the "2017 Korea Job Information" report by the Korea Employment Information Service, which includes the results of a survey of 618 jobs, 14 specialists, medical-related jobs including plastic surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics, and otolaryngology, occupy the majority of the top 20 jobs on average. Therefore, the medical school entrance is also the final victory in the entrance examination. Cho Kuk's daughter's admission fraud has caused a considerable stir for young people in their 20s because she easily went to medical school, which is a high-status career path in Korean society, without proper effort and skill. On the other hand, going to graduate school is sometimes seen as a way to withhold employment if one fails to get a job temporarily. Therefore, although the scandal involving the Yonsei University vice president's daughter's admission to graduate school is more severe than the case of Cho Kuk's daughter, her connection to employment has shifted away from the interests of the younger generation.

Furthermore, the party's social and political status in the scandal divided the youth's reverberation. One is a justice minister nominee who served as senior presidential secretary for civil affairs, while the other is a former vice president of Yonsei University. All of them are intellectuals and prominent figures in society. Going deeper, however, Cho-Kuk was nominated for justice minister for prosecution reform, one of the biggest tasks of the incumbent administration, as a symbolic figure representing the core values of the current administration. The Millennials experienced the University protests and candlelight protests against the country, and the attention to the social issue increased. Their heightened political interest and political efficacy have played a role, creating the "Cho-Kuk Incident," a major social problem. On the contrary, the political and social status of the former vice-president of Yonsei University did not attract the attention of the younger generation in terms of the possibility to be a big issue or the level of the destructive power of this incident.

Many criticize Millennials for their "selective justice" reflected in the Cho-Kuk incident. On social issues or labor issues, the Millennials were comparably silent than older generations. They are selectively applying justice and fairness when it affects their interests. August 27, 2019, a student of Seoul National University wrote on a poster "There are so many youths who have not seen and have not even enjoyed the minimum social justice that we have pretended not to know, to talk about the justice of the youth generation over our anger." The attitudes of the youth facilitate the rejection of others in the name of "fairness" rather than to embrace others. The Millennials want others to be in the same position as they are rather than see others advance. Hence as Cho-Kuk's daughter represented someone who not only advanced but did so by cheating the system, their indignation was great. However, the daughter of Yonsei Vice President was not seen as advancing in a way that threatened the interests of Millennials.

Conclusion

Millennials are not the black swan or the outcasts of Korean Society. Every generation has its own experience and no generation is superior to others. Assessing the anger of the Millennials from the perspective of other generations and viewing them as sensitive or immature would miss the point. The X generation sees the Millennials in typically two ways:

they excessively over-react to create public opinion according to political needs, and two, their rage is not evidence-based. However, from the perspective of the Millennials, both statements are not accurate.

Millennials are sensitive to academic performance and employment opportunities that they believe should be judged and offered based on merit. Millennials study in a more competitive college admission process than the older generations. After graduation, their real disposable income decreased compared to the previous generation, due to falling wages, job insecurity, and rising housing prices. If we see admission and employment as a preliminary 100m race to finish in 10 seconds to go to the next stage, the Millennials question if players would move to the next stage fairly. They state “some players have a heavy burden on their shoulders. What the country should do is to relieve its burden and allow it to play fairly. Ultimately, even if we don't win the competition, there should be basic conditions created for us to enjoy a life of dignity as a human being. Without improving the poor conditions of a human-like life, without relieving the burden on the shoulders, would anyone want to continue the game?” (Park. Wonik, Cho.Yunho,2020)

Three recent incidents-Cho Kuk Incident, ICN Irregular to Regular job conversion, and the Yonsei Vice President Incident- were analyzed based on the perspective of the Millennials. However, I found that the level of interest and rage of the Millennials show a huge difference regarding the Cho-Kuk incident and the Yonsei incident. While the Cho-Kuk incident made the headlines to call out the students to the candlelight protest, the Yonsei incident barely disturbed the students.

I interpret the different attitudes toward similar issues to be a result of the Millennials showing selective rage based on the social and political status of the figure, and the direct connection to employment. Cho-Kuk is a key member of the current administration while the Vice President of Yonsei is not a highly conspicuous public figure. Also, Cho-Kuk's daughter got into medical school which is seen as the top of the academic premium, while Yonsei MBA Program does not seem to threaten the employment space of the millennials.

Being the “N Po Generation” (Giving up N number of Things), the Millennials have given up many of the central things that make up a “proper” life. However, living “proper” will only be possible if fairness is maintained in this society. A country with the youth feeling hopeless cannot expect a bright future. Corruption in the process should disappear, and although starting from the same line is practically impossible, the government should provide solutions to relieve the burden of the millennials and provide a second chance.

If there is no hope that their social status will change, the youth will give up before they even start. However, the policymakers and the authorities in our society are the privileged. They declare they want to provide opportunities to the Millennials by increasing the size of the pie, but they do not want to give up their social position or share. Korean society is following the path of Japan that went bust in the 1990s. During the “lost decade” of the 1990s, Japan had a low birth rate, and its economic development rate started to decrease to 1%. Based on Korea's current situation, if Korea does not find a practical solution, Millennials will have to live in the toughest period of Korea.

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