

# Korean Education Longitudinal Study(KELS2005): An Analysis of the Lives and Achievements of Early Adulthood after Graduation from High School(II)

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This study analyzes ‘cognitive and non-cognitive growth and development of early adulthood,’ ‘factors associated with core competencies of college students,’ and ‘college experience and outcomes of college entrance repeaters,’ based on the 1st to the 9th Korean Education Longitudinal Study 2005 (KELS2005) surveys data with a particular focus on the 9th survey data.

Chapter II describes cognitive and non-cognitive growth and development of early adulthood. The average amount of books the respondents read per month was the lowest since when they were 8th graders. 29.91% of the respondents had engaged in a volunteering activity with the majority participating in a domestic volunteering activity. Among those who participated in a volunteering activity at social welfare organizations, the majority reported that they did so to help others. More than half of respondents had no binge drinking experience, and the proportion of which increased compared to the year of 2011 and 2012. The respondents spent the most of their time hanging out with friends and on SNS, while they spent the least of their time in volunteering activities.

The frequency of engaging in political activities has decreased compared to 2012, except for participating in election, protesting for social issues, and signing a petition.

The percentage of students who participated in self-directed learning has increased in all areas, compared to the year of 2012. Students used computers and the Internet the most frequently, while they seldom visited historical, natural, or industrial sites for self-directed learning. They found the all kinds of self-directed learning experience helpful.

In terms of self-concept, the average academic self-concept was 'fair' and the average non-academic self-concept was 'good (above the fair).' The need for cognition was 'fair', with higher need for males than females. Students showed higher competencies in all areas compared to the year of 2011, with the highest competency shown in interpersonal skills followed by cognitive skills, communication skills, and information utilization skills.

The overall stress levels of respondents were low and the percentage of students who had not experienced suicidal impulse has increased compared to the year of 2012. The most prevalent reason for the suicidal impulse was 'loneliness.' Students' life satisfaction has improved since the year of 2012 and general health condition was perceived as 'good (above the average).'

When asked about educational aspiration, the majority responded that they aspired four-year college education, while many were not sure yet. The percentages of students who reported their educational aspiration as high school, community college, or master's degree have decreased, while the percentage of students who reported their educational aspiration as doctoral degree has increased a little compared to the year of 2012.

Chapter III explores factors associated with core competencies of college students. Students perceived that their competencies in all areas (i.e., cognitive skills, information utilization skills, interpersonal skills, communication skills) had improved over time. While interpersonal skills were scored the highest, cognitive skills were the most improved and interpersonal skills were the least improved since the 7th KELS2005 survey.

Cognitive skills were in a positive relationship with college GPA, class engagement, sense of belonging, interaction with faculty, and family income. Inattention to study and college affordability anxiety were found to be in a negative relationship with cognitive skills. Years in college, self-efficacy, learning-goal-directedness, and career maturity were also positively associated with high cognitive skills. Males and students with a higher college entrance exam score showed higher level of cognitive skills compared to females and students with a lower college entrance exam score, respectively. Students attending a college located in the metropolitan area, students in public colleges and universities, students studying social science, natural science, or engineering tended to perceive their cognitive skills as relatively high.

Information utilization skills were positively affected by class engagement, sense of belonging, and interaction with faculty. Self-efficacy, learning-goal-directedness, and career maturity were also in a positive relationship with informational utilization skills. Males and students in engineering tended to perceive their information utilization skills as relatively high than females and students in liberal arts.

Interpersonal skills were positively related to class engagement, sense of belonging, and interaction with peers, while negatively related to inattention to study and interaction with faculty. Years in college, self-efficacy, and career maturity were also in a positive relationship with interpersonal skills. Males than females and students in social science than those in liberal arts perceived their interpersonal skills to be relatively higher.

Communication skills were positively affiliated with class engagement, interaction with faculty, self-efficacy, and career maturity. Students attending a college located in the Seoul metropolitan area and students studying liberal arts perceived their communication skills to be higher compared to their counterparts.

Overall, core competencies of college students were positively related with class engagement, sense of belonging, and interaction with faculty and peers. Inattention to study had a negative effect on core competencies of college students. Years in college, self-efficacy, learning- goal-directedness, and career maturity had a positive effect on college student competency. Students with a higher college entrance exam score, males, and students in social science perceived their college student competency to be higher

compared to students with a lower college entrance exam score, females, and students in liberal arts.

Chapter IV analyzes college experience and outcomes of college entrance repeaters. College entrance repeaters tended to have a lower level of sense of belonging compared to non-repeaters, but no differences were found in the levels of adjustment to college life and interaction with faculty and peers between college entrance repeaters and non-repeaters. College entrance repeaters were less likely to study hard and more likely to withdraw classes than non-repeaters. College entrance repeaters were less likely to participate in career development programs, but were more likely to work part-time and participate in private tutoring.

In terms of college outcomes, no significant gaps were found in perceived academic achievement, college GPA, and career maturity between college entrance repeaters and non-repeaters, controlling for student background covariates. Rather, student background covariates, school background covariates, college engagement, class engagement, and extra-curricular activities had a statistically significant relationship with college outcomes.

In terms of student background covariates, females than males had higher perceived academic achievement in electives, college GPA, and career maturity. GPA in high school senior year and college entrance exam score were positively related to perceived academic achievement and career maturity.

Regarding school background covariates, students in private colleges and universities showed higher perceived academic achievement, but students in public colleges and universities and in community colleges showed higher college GPA. Based on major, students majoring art, music, and physical education showed the highest perceived academic achievement and students majoring medical sciences and pharmacy showed the lowest perceived academic achievement. However, the average college GPA was the highest for students in social science and the lowest for students in education. Yet, students majoring education showed the highest career maturity.

With regard to college engagement, sense of belonging was positively related to perceived academic achievement in major and career maturity. Adjustment to college

life was positively associated with perceived academic achievement, college GPA, and career maturity, and negatively associated with interaction with peers.

As to class engagement, hard working and active class engagement were positively affiliated with higher perceived academic achievement, college GPA, and career maturity. Students with class withdrawal experience tended to have lower perceived academic achievement in major and college GPA, but higher career maturity.

Concerning extra-curricular activities, participation in career development program affected positively perceived academic achievement, college GPA, and career maturity. Experience in private tutoring affected positively college GPA, while working part-time affected negatively. Preliminary career exploration activities and working part-time were in a positive relationship with career maturity. The findings suggest that in order to improve college education outcomes, it is necessary to build an atmosphere improving students' adjustment to college life and engaging them in active learning and to provide various programs helping students' career exploration.

Policy implications from the results of this study are as follow:

Analyses on cognitive and non-cognitive growth and development urge us to support professional development for college and career counselors at secondary education. It is also necessary to develop college and career counseling programs (e.g., free semester program), which make college and career related information widely available and improve college and career related education and experience for students at both secondary and tertiary education. It is also required to introduce social care programs for high school graduates and community college graduates who entered job market relatively earlier, which can be achieved through further studies of their life.

Analyses on core competencies of college students imply for colleges and faculty to develop and apply various teaching methods to make students actively engaged in class including questioning, discussing, team projects, and presentation. To improve students' sense of belonging, colleges need to develop and facilitate a variety of programs promoting group activities. At the same time, colleges need to revise their personal administration and evaluation system to increase official and unofficial interactions between students and faculty. Government is required to pour more efforts on

development and dissemination of competency development programs for female students with further analyses on gender gap in core competencies of college students. Finally, colleges as well as government ought to seek ways to boost students' career maturity at the micro level, at the same time to pour more efforts at the macro level.

Analyses on the outcomes of college entrance repeaters require college to operate mentoring programs or communities to enhance college entrance repeaters' sense of belonging, provide academic advising programs and learning support programs to attract college entrance repeaters' active class engagement, and explore ways to strengthen students' career competency and to support employment. Most importantly, it is imperative to establish a competency-based society where students choose a college and a major not by college ranking but by their own academic and career interests to lower the rates of repeating college entrance.

**Key words:** Korean Education Longitudinal Study 2005, Early Adulthood, Competency, College Life, College Outcome, College Repeater, Endogeneity