

ปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของอัตราการฆ่าตัวตายในเกาหลีใต้



นางสาวรัชชิตา อิงค์ปัญญา

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
สาขาวิชาเกาหลีศึกษา (สหสาขาวิชา)  
บัณฑิตวิทยาลัย จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
ปีการศึกษา 2552

ลิขสิทธิ์ของจุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

FACTORS AFFECTING THE RISE OF SUICIDE RATE  
IN SOUTH KOREA



Ms. Ranshida Ingpanya

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Korean Studies  
(Interdisciplinary Program)


Graduate School  
Chulalongkorn University  
Academic Year 2009

Copyright of Chulalongkorn University


Thesis Title      FACTORS AFFECTING THE RISE OF SUICIDE RATE IN SOUTH KOREA  
By                    Ms. Ranshida Ingpanya  
Field of Study      Korean Studies  
Thesis Advisor    Associate Professor Worawet Suwanrada, Ph.D.

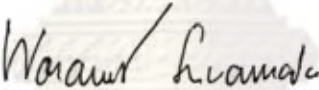
---

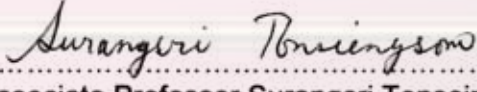
Accepted by the Graduate School, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree


  
..... Dean of the Graduate School  
(Associate Professor Pornpote Piumsomboon, Ph.D.)

THESIS COMMITTEE

  
..... Chairman  
(Professor Chaiwat Khamchoo, Ph.D.)

  
..... Thesis Advisor  
(Associate Professor Worawet Suwanrada, Ph.D.)

  
..... Examiner  
(Associate Professor Surangsri Tonseingsom, Ph. D.)

  
..... External Examiner  
(Associate Professor Tae-Gyun Park, Ph.D.)

ศูนย์วิจัยทรัพยากร

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



รัชชิดา อิงค์ปัญญา : ปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของอัตราการฆ่าตัวตายใน เกาหลีใต้ (FACTORS AFFECTING THE RISE OF SUICIDE RATE IN SOUTH KOREA) อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: รศ. ดร. วรเวศม์ สุวรรณระดา, 107 หน้า.

จากข่าวคราวการฆ่าตัวตายของเหล่าคนดังเกาหลีเป็นจำนวนมากไม่ว่าจะเป็นดารา นางแบบ หรือแม้กระทั่งอดีตประธานาธิบดีของเกาหลีเอง จะเห็นได้ว่าหลายๆคนไม่น่าจะมีปัญหา รุนแรงในชีวิตมากมาย และถ้าเราดูลึกเข้าไปอีก จะเห็นว่าสาเหตุการฆ่าตัวตายของเหล่าคน ดังเกาหลินั้นเกี่ยวข้องกับความคิดและความเครียดที่เกิดจากปัจจัยหลังจาก และนี่ก็ นำไปสู่วัตถุประสงค์ของการวิจัยในการมุ่งสำรวจหาปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของ อัตราการฆ่าตัวตายในเกาหลีใต้ ขอบเขตของปัญหารวมถึงแนวโน้มการขาดแคลนแรงงาน ตลอดจนการที่เกาหลีเองกำลังจะกลายเป็นสังคมผู้สูงอายุในอนาคตอันใกล้ ซึ่งนั่นหมายถึง ภาระของคนหนุ่มสาวที่เพิ่มมากขึ้น และตามที่คนส่วนใหญ่มักจะโทษปัจจัยภายนอก ไม่ว่าจะ เป็น การเปลี่ยนแปลงด้านประชากร ปัจจัยด้านสังคม และโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งปัจจัยด้าน เศรษฐกิจว่าเป็นสาเหตุต่างๆของการฆ่าตัวตาย ดังนั้นการศึกษาครั้งนี้จึงต้องการพิสูจน์ว่า จริงๆแล้วปัจจัยภายนอกเหล่านี้มีผลกระทบต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของอัตราการฆ่าตัวตายในเกาหลี ใต้หรือไม่ และถ้าเป็นเช่นนั้น แต่ละปัจจัยมีส่วนไปกระตุ้นการเพิ่มขึ้นของการฆ่าตัวตาย อย่างไร การศึกษานี้เป็นการศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพและปริมาณ การฆ่าตัวตายของเหล่าคนดัง เกาหลีซึ่งได้มีการรายงานผ่านสื่อในช่วงปี 2000-2009 ได้ถูกหยิบยกขึ้นมาเป็นกรณีศึกษา เพื่อสร้างความเข้าใจถึงปัจจัยที่แตกต่างกันไปของการฆ่าตัวตายในแต่ละบุคคล รวมถึงได้ ใช้สมการถดถอยซึ่งเป็นวิธีทางสถิติในการทดสอบหาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างอัตราการฆ่า ตัวตายและแต่ละตัวแปรผ่านทางโปรแกรมคอมพิวเตอร์ และผลการวิจัยพบว่าการ เปลี่ยนแปลงด้านประชากร และปัจจัยทางสังคมส่งผลกระทบต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของอัตราการฆ่า ตัวตายในเกาหลีใต้ผ่าน 4 ตัวแปร นั่นคือ อัตราการพึ่งพิงของเด็ก อัตราการพึ่งพิงของ ผู้สูงอายุ การแต่งงาน และการหย่าร้าง ปัจจัยทางเศรษฐกิจไม่มีนัยทางสถิติมากพอต่อ การเพิ่มขึ้นของการฆ่าตัวตายในเกาหลีใต้แต่นัยทางสังคม อย่างไรก็ตาม ปัจจัยภายนอก ก็ยังคงมีอิทธิพลอย่างมากต่อการเพิ่มขึ้นของการฆ่าตัวตายในเกาหลีใต้เนื่องจากผลกระทบ ลูกโซ่ที่รุนแรงจากปัจจัยภายนอกนั้นส่งผลต่อการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมและปัญหา สุขภาพจิตซึ่งนำไปสู่การฆ่าตัวตาย

สาขาวิชา เกาหลีศึกษา

ปีการศึกษา 2552

ลายมือชื่อนิสิต.....Ramshida Ingpanya.....

ลายมือชื่อ อ. ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก.....Worawee Suwanrada.....

## 5187624520 : MAJOR KOREAN STUDIES

KEYWORDS : SUICIDE/ DEMOGRAPHIC / DEPENDENCY RATE / CORRELATION / GDP PER CAPITA / CRUDE MARRIAGE RATE / CRUDE DIVORCE RATE

RANSHIDA INGPANYA: FACTORS AFFECTING THE RISE OF SUICIDE RATE IN SOUTH KOREA. THESIS ADVISOR: ASSOC. PROF. WORAWET SUWANRADA, Ph.D., 107 pp.

In South Korea, there have been numerous superstars and celebrities who have decided to take their own lives. Noticeably, many of them seem not to have any serious trouble at all. Yet if we look carefully, the cause of such Korea' high profile suicides links with pressures and stresses derived from sort of factor 'behind the scene'. This leads to the purpose of the research; that is to investigate factors affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea. The scope of problem includes trend of labor shortage in the near future, and the rapid aging society that will soon increase the dependency rate on youngster. As most people always blamed external factors such as demographic changes, social factor, and especially economic crisis as the first cause of suicide, this research aim to prove whether external factor really affect the rising of suicide rate in South Korea. If it is so, how each factor contributes to accelerate the rise of suicide? Both documentary research and quantitative research was conducted. A dozen of Korea' high profile suicides reported through media during 2000-2009 was picked up as the case studies in order to understand more on the varying factors affecting suicide decision on each individual. Also, multiple linear regression was applied to test the relationship of suicide rate and each represented factor; demographic, economic, and social through computer program. The study found that social and demographic changes was the factors affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea through 4 predictors; that is child dependency rate, aged dependency rate, crude marriage rate, and crude divorce rate. Economic factor represented by GDP per capita and unemployment rate are excluded from the equation as it did not show enough explanatory power. However, external factors still play a major role in sparking the rise of suicide rate in South Korea because of its severe impact affecting social changes and mental illness contributing to higher suicide rate.

Field of Study : Korean Studies

Student's Signature Ranshida Ingpanya.

Academic Year : 2009

Advisor's Signature Worawet Suwanrada



## Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank those who made this thesis possible. First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Associate Professor Worawet Suwanrada, Ph.D. I am deeply appreciated his valuable guidance. Moreover, I wish to extend my gratitude to Prof. Chaiwat Khamchoo, Ph.D., and Associate Professor Surangsri Tonseingsom, Ph.D. for their kindness and helpful advice for my thesis. Also, I would like to express my appreciation to Associate Professor Tae-Gyun Park, Ph.D. for his valuable time suggesting my thesis during his stay in Bangkok. His advice is really sparking more idea on my thesis.

Special thanks to my family for all their concern and encouragement that always given to me. Of course, many thanks for all my Korean studies' friends for all their help and support on my research. Without all their support, I couldn't possibly complete this project.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

# Contents

	<b>Page</b>
Thai abstract.....	iv
English abstract.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Contents.....	vii
List of tables.....	x
List of figures.....	xi
List of abbreviations.....	xii
<b>Chapter I: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Background.....	1
Research problem.....	4
Research question.....	5
Objective.....	5
Hypothesis.....	5
Scope of study.....	5
Expected result.....	5
Conceptual framework.....	6
Term definition.....	6
<b>Chapter II: Theories and literature review</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Type of suicide.....	7
Anomic suicide.....	8
Economic theory on suicide.....	8
Integration theory.....	9
Dependency.....	12

	<b>Page</b>
Risk factors on suicide.....	13
<b>Chapter III: Research methodology.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Data collection.....	15
Data limitation.....	15
Research tool.....	16
<b>Chapter IV: Situational analysis.....</b>	<b>18</b>
Trend analysis.....	18
International comparison.....	20
Stress exploring.....	24
Age analysis.....	25
Gender analysis.....	28
How Korean suicide is different?.....	30
Method of suicide in South Korea.....	33
High-profile suicide analysis.....	34
Case studies on high-profile suicides.....	36
Case studies # 1: Lee Eun-Joo.....	36
Case studies # 2: U;nee.....	38
Case studies # 3: Jeong Da Bin.....	39
Case studies # 4: Ahn Jae-Hwan.....	41
Case studies # 5: Choi Jin-Sil.....	41
Case studies # 6: Jang Chae-Won.....	43
Case studies # 7: Kim Ji-Hoo.....	44
Case studies # 8: Kim Seok-kyun.....	45
Case studies # 9: Jang Ja-Yeon.....	45
Case studies # 10: Woo Seung-Yeon.....	46



	<b>Page</b>
Case studies # 11: Ex-president, Roh Moo-Hyun.....	47
Case studies # 12: Daul Kim.....	49
<b>Chapter V: Statistic findings and factors analysis.....</b>	<b>51</b>
Factors analysis.....	51
Demographic factor.....	51
Economic factor.....	53
Social factor.....	58
Findings.....	61
<b>Chapter VI: Conclusion and implication.....</b>	<b>67</b>
Conclusion.....	67
Implication.....	71
<b>References.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>80</b>
Appendix A: The comparison of suicide rate: Korea: U.S.: Japan..	81
Appendix B: Suicide rate: Thailand VS Korea.....	82
Appendix C: International comparison among OECD.....	83
Appendix D: Cost of ill: Past VS Present.....	84
Appendix E: Leading causes of death in Korea.....	85
Appendix F: Statistic data .....	86
Appendix G: Scatter Plot.....	88
Appendix H: Statistic findings: Correlation table.....	89
Appendix I: Statistic findings: Best subset regression table.....	90
Appendix J: Results: Testing equation's creditability.....	91
Appendix K: Confucian doctrine .....	92
<b>Biography.....</b>	<b>95</b>

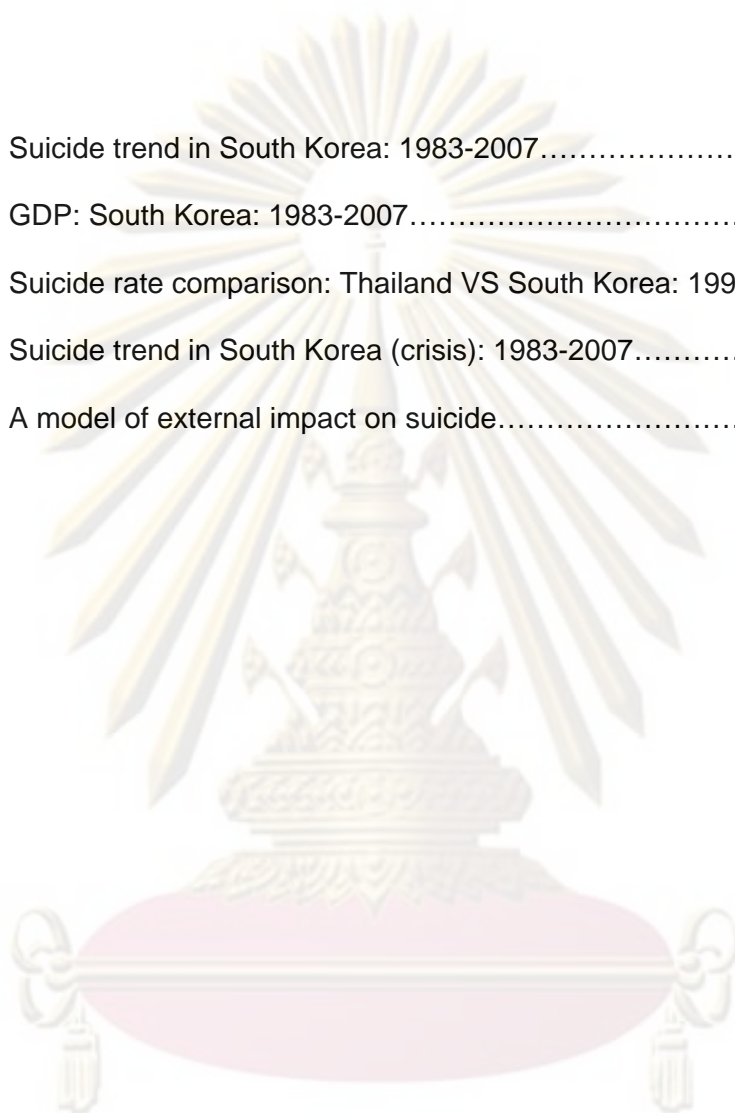
## List of tables

<b>Table</b>		<b>Page</b>
1	Differences characteristics between Thai people and Korean.....	23
2	Number of suicides by age group and gender, South Korea, 2006..	25
3	Suicide among leading causes of death by age group, 2005.....	26
4	Elderly suicide rate, 1998-2002.....	27
5	Table of high-profile suicides.....	36
6	Represented variables.....	51
7	Child dependency VS Aged dependency.....	52
8	The reduction of monthly income in different economic group (1997-1998).....	55
9	Changes in divorce situation.....	59
10	The comparison of regression analysis.....	62
11	Summary of factors affecting high-profile suicides.....	64


  
 ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## List of Figures

Figure		Page
1	Suicide trend in South Korea: 1983-2007.....	1
2	GDP: South Korea: 1983-2007.....	18
3	Suicide rate comparison: Thailand VS South Korea: 1997-2007.....	20
4	Suicide trend in South Korea (crisis): 1983-2007.....	53
5	A model of external impact on suicide.....	65



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



## List of Abbreviations

GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
KNSO:	Korea National Statistical Office
KOSIS:	Korean Statistical Information Service
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN:	United Nations
WHO:	World Health Organization



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

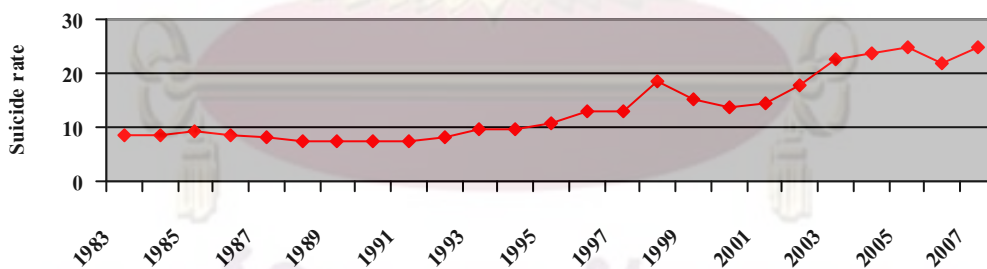
## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Background

Over one million commit suicide every year the world over. Dying by suicide is even more than dying by all the armed conflicts around the world. According to WHO, it is forecasted that by the year 2020, 1.53 million would die by suicide every year and suicide will represent 2.4 percent of the total burden of disease. Interestingly, around sixty percent of suicides in the world occur in Asia. Point to South Korea, suicide is the leading cause of death for South Koreans in their 20s and 30s, and the fourth cause of death overall. Now, suicide has become an epidemic, spreading at every single stratum of South Korea and covering all age groups. Evidenced by the highest rank of suicide rate among the 30 member countries of the OECD, now suicide are creeping as the major problem in South Korea.

Figure 1: Suicide Trend in South Korea: 1983-2007



Source: Korean Statistical Information Service  
([http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp))

In 1983, as the country was just emerging from the ashes of the Korean War, the rate was 8.7 suicides per 100,000 people (KOSIS figures). By 2005, when the country was the world's 13th largest economy, the suicide rate was up to 24.7 per 100,000 (KOSIS figures), higher than Japan, the country with more than double South Korea's population or even higher than that of the United States, the country with more than 6 times South Korea's population. Most serious is the steep increase of suicide among

young and working group. The high suicide rate is seen by many South Koreans as a national disgrace since it is the key indicator of the state of one's community. Suicide remains a growing social and public health issue in many regions worldwide, especially in South Korea.

In term of economy, South Korea is well known for its miracle economic growth, with a 100-fold increase in the per capita gross national income from US\$ 156 in 1960 to US\$ 16,533 in 2005 (UN statistics database). Of course, the rapid economic growth affected the fast changing on their living pattern. During the Japanese occupation, South Korean people went through the rapid change in political, economic and social structures. Colonization, comfort women, several wars experienced, dictatorship, national humiliation could be some serious potentialities for mental health, before South Korea get to the recent problems of education fever, rising unemployment, intense competition among South Korean itself, etc. So, South Korean people had to reinvent their ways of life, their ways of thinking, or even reinvent themselves. That means ongoing adaptation always needed for survival in South Korea. Furthermore, some cultural factors accelerate the rise of suicide; lack of religious prohibition against suicide, a strong social stigma against mental treatment, a hyper literary tradition, a view of suicide as an honorable act, a way of taking responsibility for failure, but what changed the most is the family structure. Traditional safety-net measures liked having extended families living under one roof have weakened as the economy has grown stronger. The nuclear family led to the increasing isolation. That means the social support system has changed from very close-knit family, mutually dependent to the independent, smaller structure with little support network. As the result of changing in family structure, the new generation strongly dealt with computers. Instead of talking, they do computer. As we have seen the rapid transformation over the last 40 years, it reflected that South Korean had a hard time keeping up with capitalist values. Even the modernization can totally change the external look of South Korea, but internally, South Korea keep on dragging its traditional values of Confucianism from the pre-modern era. As mentioned above, these could be some of the crucial factors that caused the increasing trend of suicide in South Korea.

Moreover, a brief slump due to economic crisis in late 1997 stressed the worse situation, and later left various negative impacts on South Korean society. Per capita



gross domestic product dropped from US\$ 11,276 in 1997 to US\$ 7,486 in 1998 (UN Statistics Database). Since then, it seems hard and harder to earn the life in South Korea. As the result, the fertility rate is sharply dropped, while the suicide rate is extremely increasing in high proportion. The financial crisis in 1997 became the sparking point of the sudden increase of suicide among South Koreans, especially the young and middle age. After that, the suicide rate has remained high ever since. Evidenced by the 2007 statistics by the National Statistical Office (KNSO), the data showed that from 244,874 deaths, 12,174 cases were reported as suicides. The death rate translates into an average of 33 people a day taking their own lives, a double increased from 1997.

However, economic crisis showed different effects on the suicide rate vary by country. Thailand, for an example, was also faced the serious economic downturn like South Korea during 1997-1998. The suicide rate in Thailand was only a slight surged in 1998-1999 and started to decline after economic recovery in 2002. In contrast, South Korea evoked the remarkable suicide curve, and there is no sign of downward trend of suicide in South Korea even the economic recovery. Thus, it would be related to the other differences factors between countries as well.

In the west, the sense of self-worth is encouraged; "Who cares what someone else think about you?" In contrast, that idea is much weaker in South Korea where decisions and behaviors are often based upon what will be considered acceptable by society. South Korean people are proud of being homogeneous ethnic. Notice from Korean language, the word "we" is more often used than the word "I" as well as the word "our" instead of "my". Furthermore, they interpret Confucius ethic as the concern on harmony in all things. South Koreans don't want to be different. More serious is that a growing number of people are trying to seek suicide pact through Internet. As we know that South Korea is one of the world's most wired countries with a highly developed Internet infrastructure, therefore, meaning searching methods to kill oneself or seeking partner for group suicides are just a few clicks away. It is sad that cyberspace is increasingly used to end one's own life.

Choi Jin-sil., the famous movie star killed herself after the speedy wide-spread of internet hate. Under the serious face, South Korean's mind seems to be sensitive and fragile, it seems their self-esteem be influenced by external forces rather than

internal forces. The situation became worse when the ex-president, Roh Moo Hyun also committed to suicide. In South Korea, Roh is the highest profile of recent suicides of public figures. The suicide of ex-president, Roh has in turn attracted the huge attention on the suicide phenomenon in South Korea. Almost every newspaper worldwide rolled out alarming statistics on the South Korea's suicide rate, the highest in the developed world. However, copycat deaths are a worried trend. Whenever famous people kill themselves, there is an effect on others to imitate. People at risk can see these celebrities' death as an example and say, "Well if he can do it, so can I". Finally, even the economic development is important for South Korea's growth, but how to make people stay happily in the society is also important to create the better healthy environment for living in South Korea. Even most people knew that suicide is "shouldn't do" matter, but why the disciplined South Koreans violate this taboo, and choose suicide as the way out!

## **2. Research problem**

Besides the lost of valuable human resources, South Korea, as well as OECD countries will face with the serious trend of labor shortage in 2030. The number of population will be too small to maintain South Korea's economic growth in the near future. Moreover, the rapid aging society will soon increase the dependency rate on youngster. Statistically, most deaths in South Korea are male. Unfortunately, adolescent and middle-age who are the potential working group are most at risk. Also, in patriarchy society, men are the breadwinner, and carry a big burden, while the women role is misuse. So, South Korea cannot fully utilize women's capability. If the suicide rate still keeps on increasing, it would create long-term problem to the number of young and working group in South Korea. So, it's urgent to find out the causes of suicide in order to reduce pressure and stress including create more leisurely society in South Korea.

### 3. Research question

- As most people always blame external factors like demographic change, social factor, and especially economic crisis, as the first cause of suicide, so do the external factors really affect the rise of suicide rate in South Korea? If it is so, how each factor contributes to accelerate the rise of suicide rate in South Korea?

### 4. Objective

- To investigate the factors affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea

### 5. Hypothesis

#### 5.1) *Demographic factor:*

- Dependency rate affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea

#### 5.2) *Economic factor:*

- GDP per capita affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea
- Unemployment rate affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea

#### 5.3) *Social factor:*

- Crude marriage rate affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea
- Crude divorce rate affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea

### 6. Scope of study

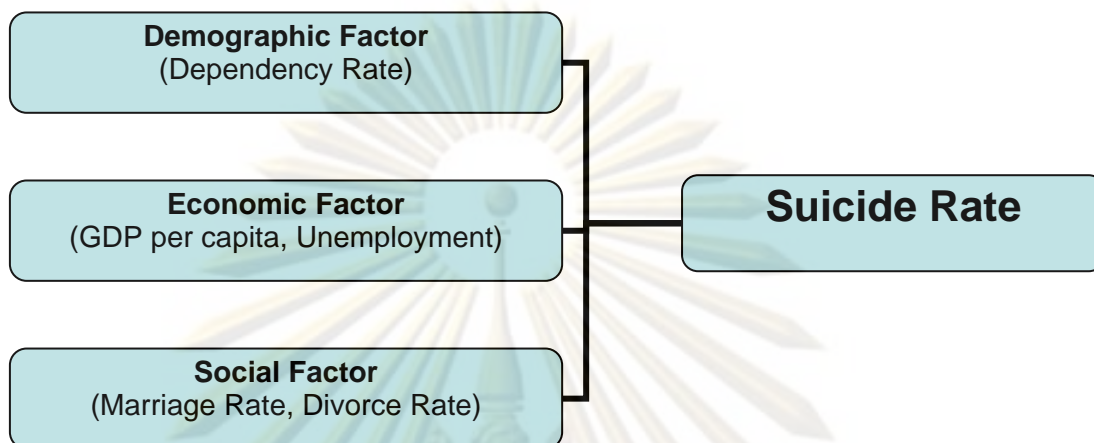
- In terms of quantitative research, the study is focused on the external factors that can be measured; demographic, economic, and social factor that affects the rise of suicide rate in South Korea during 1983-2008.
- In terms of documentary research, only the apparent high profile' suicides occurred in South Korea that reported through media ranging from 2000-2009 was picked up as the case studies in order to understand more on the varying factors affecting suicide decision on each individual.

### 7. Expected result

- To create awareness on the serious trend of suicide
- To provide suggestion leading to implementation and improving South Korea as the better healthy place for living



## 8. Conceptual framework



The diagram shows the overview picture of factors affecting suicide in South Korea. As many people as well as scholars always link suicide with external factors, therefore, the conceptual framework is; demographic, economic and social have relationship with suicide. Each main factor contains the represented independent variables required for further analysis.

## 9. Term definition:

- **“Suicide”**- Intentional self-harm.
- **“Suicide ideation”**- A thought, setting up the process leading to the ending of one’s own life.
- **“Attempted suicide”**- Intentional effort to complete suicide.
- **“Suicide pact”**- An agreement between two or more people to commit suicide together at a given place and time.
- **“Suicide rate”**- Occurrence of suicide in a given population or community; usually expressed in deaths/100,000 population.
- **“Anomic suicide”**- Suicide caused by a breakdown of traditional social norms
- **“Copycat”**- Persons who act as an imitator.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 1. Type of suicide

Durkheim (1897) theorized four types of suicide, based on the degrees of imbalance of two social forces; social integration and moral regulation

**1.1) Egoistic suicide** dealt with too little social integration. Those individuals who have less social bonds were left with little social support, and later lead to higher suicide rate. Single people, especially males were an example of this type of suicide. However, South Korean is among the most tightly integrated people in the world. Therefore, suicide caused by lack of integration (egoism) is not so obviously seen in South Korea.

**1.2) Altruistic suicide** dealt with too much integration. The outstanding characteristic is self-sacrifice. It was normally seen when individuals were deeply integrated into social groups, and willing to sacrifice even their own lives for the sake of group's interests. Member of the military can be the best described of altruistic suicide.

**1.3) Anomic suicide** stood at the low end. Anomie is the result of the sudden changes that creating a new unfamiliar situation affecting one's social status as well as the reduction of the buffering capacity and coping ability. Anomie was considered as the failure of society to adequately regulate and integrate the individual's desires and goals, thus affecting the one's self-identity, expectations, and role in society. Role conflict is a common result of anomie suicide. At worst, the imbalance later could drive to impulse, and finally, end up with voluntary self-destruction.

**1.4) Fatalistic suicide** was located "at the high extreme of the regulation scale." It was rarely happened in the real world. Examples include those with overregulated, unrewarding lives such as slaves, childless married women, and young husbands.

## 2. Anomic suicide

With the above basic understanding of suicide, anomie suicide seems to be the best fit with the rise of suicide rate in South Korean society. Durkheim's theory on anomic suicide comes into great focus in form of an imbalance of integration and regulation in South Korean society including role conflict.

Anomy involves an imbalance of means and needs, where means are unable to fulfill needs (Durkheim, 1897). Too much integration and regulation, as well as too little, can lead to suicide decision.

- **Low levels** of social integration may lead to the disordered society, isolation, alienation, and loneliness.
- **High levels** may cause people to commit suicide when the social pressure becomes too severe or to avoid becoming burden of the society.

Merton (1937) defined anomie suicide as a state of normlessness (Cited in Orcutt, 1983). However, each case of suicide expressed the personal stamp on one's temperament, including the specific involved conditions. As Durkheim defined, suicide remains complicated to understand.

## 3) Economic theory on suicide

Hamermesh and Soss (1974) stated that an individual commit suicide when "Expected life time utility is less than utility from committing suicide". While many psychologists and scholars consider suicide as an irrational behavior, Hamermesh and Soss consider suicide as a rational behavior to maximize individual discounted expected lifetime utility. The theory proposed that suicide decreases with higher income because higher income means more lifetime utility. In contrast, suicide increases with age and unemployment since it reduces expected life time utility; that is bad health and less in future disposal income. The model can be applied to a variety of socioeconomic variables such as the distribution of income, wealth, divorce, birth and so on. Many empirical studies support this view (Chuang and Huang, 1997; Brainerd, 2001; Neumayer, 2003; Rodríguez, 2005). However, there is a conflict with Durkheim's hypothesizes that higher income levels increase independence, and leads to higher suicide rate.



#### 4) Integration theory

Individuals are integrated into a social group, regulated by its norms and conventions. Therefore, marriage and birth rates are expected to have a negative relationship with suicide rate since those factors strengthen family and social integration. In contrast, the divorce rate and alcohol consumption are expected to have positive relationship with suicide rates since these factors represent the lack of such integration. Meanwhile, the impact of female labor participation on suicide rate is unclear. If female labor participation worsen family ties, it has a positive effect on suicide rate (Durkheim, 1897), followed by Yang (1992), and Neumayer (2003). However, if working women enjoy social integration as well as financial benefits through their careers, it decreases suicide rate (Stack, 1998). The three main integrations; that is religion, family & social integration, and economic integration will be discussed below as a review.

**4.1) Religious Integration:** Religious and social taboos can make suicide decision more difficult. In Islamic countries (for example, Kuwait), where self-harm is strictly forbidden, the total suicide rate is close to zero (0.1 per 100,000 population). Inversely, the total suicide rate is obviously highest in atheist countries liked China (Vijayakumar, 2003).

In the west, religious integration act as a strong defense against suicide. Unfortunately, it is not in Japan. Shintoist has a strong correlation with suicide rate, especially among women. The data on Buddhist and Christian indicate much weaker correlations. At worst, religious adherence could contribute to suicide in Japan (Chandler and Tsai, 1993).

**4.2) Social Integration:** The study of Chandler & Tsai (1993) on the ideation of Japanese suicide is coincided with the situation in South Korea. The group-oriented is very important in Japan. Japanese was prolonged conducted as the norm starting from individual till the groups, institutions, including the business firm. In Japan, it is difficult to live without belonging to a group, and once you fall out; there is hardly a chance to get back. In addition, the failure in achieving the unreachable goals leads to an unbalanced society. The pressure is very high among males since they all supposed to fill in the top universities, and the high reputation companies, respectively. Those who fail are doomed as the failure in life. Thus, the unrealistically



lofty goals create the perfect environment for suicide prone, as well as promoting altruistic-fatalistic suicide (Chandler and Tsai 1993).

Moreover, Japanese tends to be about the same in class and even about equal in ability and potential. This drives to the desire for more and more achievement, in form of education, career, business, and status. His study found that those famous Japanese are not much different than the average citizen. They are not viewed as special people. Instead, they are considered as the lucky ones for being in the right place at the right time. That pressures Japanese to put more and more attempt to be better than the average. Perfectionism caused by the role conflict, failure of dreams, and the bitter realization of being common among an extremely integrated society with unregulated desires can all stimulate suicide ideation (Chandler and Tsai, 1993).

This kind of unlimited and unregulated desires is a deadly formula for anomy suicide since it interrupts the scale of regulation and integration (Durkheim, 1897). To explain more in depth the importance on the balance of regulation and integration in society, Durkheim emphasized on needs and living beings. Humans are all tied to the biological needs: food, shelter, and clothing. In addition to these primal needs, people demand more for societal and psychosocial needs, belonging to a community, identity, interaction, and family. Therefore, human desires are endless. Instead of filling needs, satisfaction derived when more desires are achieved. Furthermore, pursuing a lofty goal will drive oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness. Thus, humans must balance their desires and goals in order to create the equilibrium society.

**4.3) Family Integration:** Marital status has a strong correlation with suicide rate. Divorced and widowed appears higher suicide rates than single people. The study showed the greater reduction of suicide rate in married men than married women (Gove & Hughes, 1981). Therefore, marriage is the best protection against suicide among those in other marital status (Samaritans, 2009).

Unlike the west, marriage tends to stimulate suicide, especially for women who apparently suffer from the demands and restraints of the strong patriarchy structure liked Japan. Also, it fails to provide a buffer against suicide for the male. Therefore, both institutions; religion and family are not influential enough in Japan (Chandler and

Tsai, 1993). His finding was totally conflict with Durkheim (1897) that defined both religion and family tie as the protection for suicide.

According to the American journal of psychiatry, September 2007, it is very common for people to become depressed after a divorce. So, a divorce can significantly spark suicidal risk. Statistically, over 90% of suicide caused by untreated depression. A US study further indicates that divorced people are three times more likely to die by suicide than married people. Poverty, unemployment, and disability were related with divorce in some of the countries. So, the strong support network in place is strongly recommended for those divorced people (Gibbons, et al., 2007). Moreover, men are two and a half times more risky to commit suicide after divorce compared to women. The result from these studies is totally conflicted with the prolonged perception that women suffer more after divorce (Walsh, 2008). Even women are those who suffer more than men after a divorce in term of financially; however, divorce doesn't seem to increase suicide rate among women. That is because there is a difference variation in coping with stress between genders (Pilar, 2004).

Men and women have different ways in forming social bonds. Men enjoy making friends with whom they can hang out, while women enjoy making friends with whom they can share their feelings. Women are socialized friendship in term of depth; whereas men are socialize in term of width. Due to the nature of hiding their pain, men avoid expressing their bitterness and hurt during the divorce. Men are more likely to feel a void in their lives. So, when a divorce occurred, women can better deal with the situation because of more social support network, while men are opposite (Breault, and Kposowa, 2000).

Also, there are different coping styles between genders. According to Howard Markman, Ph.D.(1994), author of "Fighting for Your Marriage" and a psychologist at The University of Denver, men normally tend to do more self-destructive coping with stress, like turn to alcohol abuse. Supported with Alvin Baraff, Ph.D. (1992), an expert on relationships from a male perspective, and founder and director of Men Center Counseling in Washington, D.C., the majority of divorce proceedings were initiated by women. Therefore, man is shocked with this unexpected news, because he lost not only a wife, but his children, home, money, and importantly, the preserving role of breadwinner as well. More evidence from Bruce Hillowe, J.D.,

Ph.D., a family law attorney and a clinical psychologist in Long Island, New York stated that men lose the role of being a father, while women do not lose the role of being a mother (Cited in Yang, 2000).

**4.4) Economic Integration:** It was the lack of social regulation and integration that caused people to commit suicide rather than any physical hardship endured from economic poverty. The sudden increased of suicide rate was not only during economic recession, but during the extreme economic prosperity as well. Instead, the extreme upswing in economic condition was a result of sudden class change, a direct shift in the equilibrium of society, extreme role conflict and normlessness known as anomie suicide (Durkheim, 1897).

In addition, the study of Chandler & Tsai (1993) on economic pressure to Japanese' suicides is partly match with the situation in South Korea. According to regression equation, per capita income was the most crucial factor for male suicide rates. Also, unemployment is positively associated. In order to maintain Japan's boast over other nations as the economic leader, it drive the high pressure to Japanese people as well. Those who fail to meet the social's expectation may think of suicide as the way out (Chandler and Tsai, 1993).

## 5. Dependency

Leff (1969) theorized that as the dependency rate increased, the working age group bear heavier responsibility for supporting the dependent, thus reduce the family saving rate and physical capital accumulation. (An and Jeon, 2006)

Dependency rate has a negative relationship with economic growth (An and Jeon, 2006). High interpersonal dependency can be reversed to suicide attempters that might be shown through levels of depression as well as the high rate of female suicide attempters (Nuns, and Loas, 2005).

Elderly who are living alone do not commit suicide that often. In contrast, older Japanese viewed co-resides with their children and grandchildren as the stress and dependency, due to the generation gap and income dependency. For many rural elderly, the stress caused by co-residence can be severe to lead some of them commit suicide (Traphagan, 2004)



## 6. Risk Factors for Suicide

There are generally 2 motivations for suicide; Psychological and situational. The first group dealt with inner domination through suffering from chronic depression, bipolarity and other forms of mental illness. The second group dealt with the inability to buffer against the specific worse situation (Beck, 2009). In addition, mood disorders was the strongest risk factors affecting suicide ideation and behavior in high income countries while impulse control disorders appeared the strongest risk factor in low and middle-income countries (Lavoie, 2008). Reiss and Dombeck (2007) gave the hint contribute to suicide as follow;

- **Women are more likely to attempt suicide, but men are more likely to complete suicides** Researchers pointed that men suffering from depression are more likely to refuse treatment since men may avoid seeking help (viewed as a weakness) than women suffering from depression. As the result, the co-occurring situation is alcohol and substance abuse as the mean to reduce stress.
- **Age:** suicide have a direct relationship with the increasing age, e.g. health problem with the increasing age
- **Marital status** is linked with suicide risk. Living alone and being single both increase the risk of suicide. Marriage can be the protection against suicide while divorce, separation and widowhood can stimulate suicides. Also, gender plays a role here. Divorced and widowed men tend to commit suicide than divorced and widowed women.
- **Being a parent, especially mothers, or even pregnant women can reduce suicide risk.**
- **Chronic illness:** Any chronic illness increases the risk of suicide.
- **Industrialized countries** generally posses the higher suicide rates than non-industrialized countries.
- **Religion seems to be a buffer against suicide.** Research found that in the United States, areas with higher percentages of individuals without religious adherence have higher suicide.
- **Certain occupations:** People with certain occupations are more likely to die by suicide, for example farmers (who usually work alone, may be unmarried



- **Economic status plays little effect on suicide.** Early suicide researchers defined that poverty was a main risk factor for suicide by theorizing that being poor could lead one feel depressed, desperate or ashamed at times. Their finding has shown that both the lowest-low and highest-high incomes are more strongly associated with rates of suicide than other income levels. In other words, the extremes of either poverty or wealth affected the rise of suicide rate.
- **Adverse life events:** The example is the sudden change of labor restructuring during the economic crisis. The prolonged employment practices are break by the shock waves of layoff during economic woes.
- **Unemployment** is related with higher suicide rate. Work is very important in South Korea. Losing one's job is associated with the loss of 'face'. Obviously, people who are unemployed often experience financial stress that could increase suicide risk.

However, suicidal behavior is complex. Some risk factors vary by country with age, gender, and ethnic group that may even change over time. The risk factors for suicide frequently occur in combination.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research applied the documentary and quantitative research as the mean to identify the rising cause of suicide in South Korea.

#### 1. Data collection

- The study presents data on suicide rate according to the demographic, economic and social factors. These data provide information on suicide pattern among residents of South Korea by such representative variables as dependency rate, GDP per capita, unemployment rate, crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate. This information is the key to understand changes in the health and well-being of the South Korean that could lead to suicide decision. The statistical data are based on the database from WHO, UN Demographic Yearbook, UN statistical yearbook, UN database, OECD, KOSIS and KNSO (Korea's National Statistics office).

#### 2. Data limitation

- Due to the limitation of suicide data, most of the statistics provide only crude death rate. The death rate divided by cause is also provided, but based on 5 years basis. Even the Demographic Year Book published by UN, WHO, or even OECD also not cover all historical data. The only sources for suicide rate are through KNSO, KOSIS and search from other previous researches. Therefore, the maximum collected data here is based on 26 years basis, ranging from 1983-2008.

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

### 3. Research tools

#### 3.1) Quantitative research

Multiple linear regression is applied to test the hypothesis in order to find the relationship of suicide rate and each main represented factor through computer program. The main factors affecting the increasing of suicide rate include demographic, economic, social and cultural factors. Since the cultural factor is quite limited in term of historical measurable data, therefore, here, only demographic, economic and social factors will be used to measure the relationship of suicide rate. The study picked the main representative variables of each factor to test the hypothesis as follow;

- **Demographic Factor:** (Child Dependency rate and Aged dependency rate)
- **Economic Factor:** (Unemployment rate and GDP per capita)
- **Social Factor:** (Crude marriage rate and Crude divorce rate)

This research applied the multiple regression method as the mean to test the hypothesis. The steps included;

- Best subset regression is applied to test whether which predictors are the most fit to the model.
- Find out the best linear regression equation.
- Test the accuracy of the equation

The result from the statistic findings can provide more on macro picture that could facilitate the further micro analysis.

### 3.2) Documentary research

The general information including the current suicide situations is conducted on the documentary basis, by searching from Chulalongkorn Library, and websites. In addition, the apparent high profile's suicide from 2000-2009 occurred in South Korea is studied in order to provide micro picture that could help clarify on the varying factors affecting suicide decision on each individual. The research covered 6 chapters as follows;

- Chapter 1: Introduction and problem identification
- Chapter 2: Theories and literature review
- Chapter 3: Research methodology
- Chapter 4: Situational analysis
- Chapter 5: Factors analysis
- Chapter 6: Conclusion and implication



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



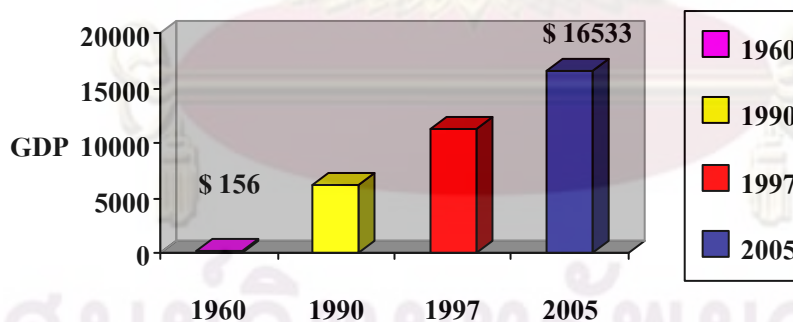
## CHAPTER IV

### SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

#### 1. Trend Analysis

From the overview of mortality death in South Korea, the decreasing on total suicide mortality rates has been bouncing to various sorts of short-term socioeconomic shocks. In contrast, the obvious increase in suicide spurred mainly from this short-term economic downturn. Supported with the decreasing of suicide rates among OECD countries was inversed with the increasing suicide trends found in South Korea, particularly since the 1997 economic crisis. This can show that South Korea suicide is different from others. As noted by Durheim, suicide is the individual behavior influenced by social integration or regulation. Therefore, socioeconomic changes should also be considered to explain suicide patterns in South Korea.

Figure 2: Republic of Korea: GDP, 1960-2005



Source: United Nations Database

(<http://data.un.org>)

After enjoying smooth economic growth for decades, South Korea faced a steep economic slump in 1997. The economic crisis resulted from excessive foreign and domestic borrowing by South Korean firms and financial institutions which later led to broad re-structuring in South Korea. The interrupted of the accelerating economic growth of previous decades caused a sudden reversal of the South Korea's annual

GDP growth rate of 5–10% to –6.7% in 1998. The unemployment rate of 2.6% in the last quarter of 1997 increased to 8.4% in the first quarter of 1999—hit the peak in South Korea's recent history. Household income reduced by 6.7% in 1998, representing the first household income reduction since 1963. Moreover, these economic changes can be powerful determinants of health problems.

However, the health impact of economic crises may depend on the depth and length of the crisis including the buffering capacity of a society as well. Since 2000, suicide rates in South Korea have increased sharply among elderly men and women. Rising poverty rates, especially among the elderly, following the 1997 economic crisis are a major reason for increasing numbers of South Korean suicides. Furthermore, South Korea experienced a rapid increase of household debt in the early 2000s. The heavy burden of debt repayment in the household sector has made the South Korean economy less stable. In 2004, South Korea suffered the unstable economic condition added with effect from U.S. Sub prime; several cases that pop up had similarity with the 1997 economic crisis. The unemployment rate and the number of families involved in bad debt were obviously high. According to the survey, around 4 million South Koreans were unable to pay their credit card and each family owed about 2 million won on average. The strong economic pressure again caused intense stress. As the result, suicide and households violence cases increased.

With the experiences of suicide peak in 1998, the government and many experts gave public a warning on suicides. However, many counterattacks had been applied with no avail. Logically, the government's efforts to improve the economic climate supposed to reduce suicide levels. Currently, the unemployment rate has dropped to 3.2 percent in 2008, but suicide still keeps on increasing. As people always blame the external factor, especially the economic crisis as the first causes of this abnormally high suicide rate, then, if South Korea gradually pulls out of its economic difficulties, the suicide rate should significantly drop. Unfortunately, South Korea did not fall in that assumption. Actually, South Korea's high suicide has little to do with economic factor. The suicides dropped in 2006 with 21.8 suicides per 100,000 seem to be the good sign. But by 2007, according to the National Statistics Office, the suicide rate was up to 24.8. This upsurge occurred at the same time as the hopeful president; Lee Myung-bak stepped up with promises of economic growth. Unemployment figures were still holding steady around 3.5 to 4%. None of this can

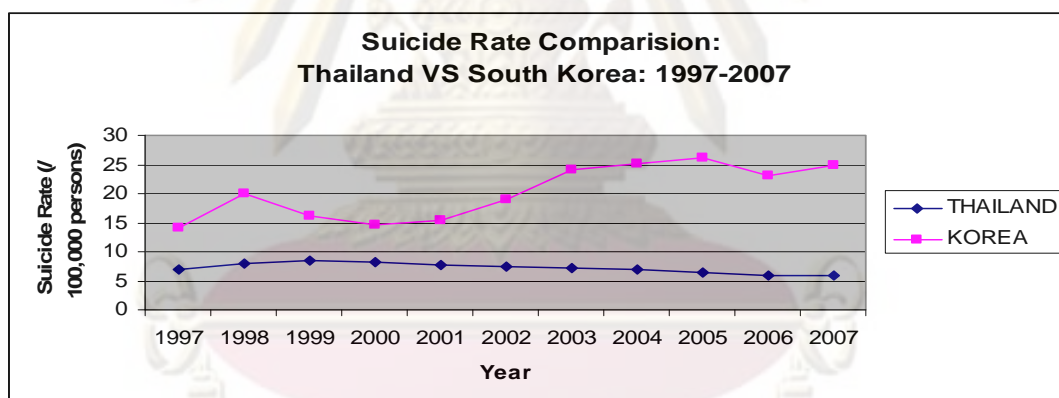
support that the economic downturn caused more suicides. However, the alarming numbers of suicides in modern South Korea are above and beyond economics that stimulate the sense of despair.

As economic factor seem to be the sparking point of rising suicide rate, the study will next discuss on international comparison in order to provide the clearer picture on how economic factor affecting suicide varying by countries. Since Thailand also faced the serious economic downturn liked South Korea during 1997-1998, therefore, Thailand is picked up as comparison for more understanding on the unique characteristics of South Korean suicides.

## 2. International comparison

### 2.1) Economic effect

**Figure 3: Suicide rate comparison: Thailand VS South Korea: 1997-2007**



**Source:** Korean Statistical Information Service ([http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp)) and Ministry of Public Health (<http://www.dmh.go.th/plan/suicide/sui41.asp>)

From the graph, economic crisis showed different effects on the suicide rate vary by country. Noticeably, the suicide rate generally went up more in Asian countries than the west when there was an economic downturn. As mentioned earlier, the financial crisis evoked an upward suicide trend with a ripple effect occurring even after economic recovery in South Korea. Although South Korea's recession appears to be recovered, the financial turmoil and despair still existed because the fruits were enjoyed only by major corporations and their employees, rather than workers of small to medium-sized companies, who mainly suffered from the recent bankruptcies. More witnesses from the sudden increase of suicide in 1998 with no sign of decline even



economic recovery. In contrast, Thailand was also the country most affected by economic crisis like South Korea in 1997-1998. The suicide rate in Thailand surged in 1999, and declined after recovery of the crisis. Meanwhile, there is only slight effect on suicide when the crisis occurred in the west. Thus, suicides would be related to the differences in social networks between countries as well.

**2.2) Buffering capacity:** Actually, South Korea's crisis was not so in depth, but what make it serious is the South Korean socio-cultural itself. Compared to Thailand, South Korea can redeem all rescue loans faster and ended up everything beautifully by August 2001 with the plus of their harmony and nationalism. Nevertheless, it left many changes in the South Korean economy in term of length, for example, the significant increasing in flexibility of the labor market. As the result, the previous of the total number of wage and salary workers turn to replace with the increasing proportion of temporary and daily workers from 43.2% in 1996 to 51.6% in 2002. Job security is no longer guaranteed. Also, income inequality soared during this period. The other is that the social safety net in South Korea was relatively weak compared to Thailand. Under the strong external look, South Korean could not buffer against sudden adverse economic. As we all know that what people hate the most is sudden change. People are creatures of habit. Changing habits is much harder than changing external structures. By nature, human being will resist against sudden change. With the unstoppable economic growth, South Korea became a wealthy country. Their citizens are familiar with the comfortable and luxurious life and moreover, searching for greater meaning in life. Therefore, the declassment and sudden lost of security in life both in form of money and job are something unacceptable for them. This economic crisis affected an individual in form of the downward social mobility since those of them may lose their social prestige, status and finally be sudden forced to exist at a lower standard of living. They must therefore lower their demands, restrain their want, and learn greater on self-control. Unavoidably, the unemployment and even increasing inflation are probably paired outcomes from economic crisis. Under inflation, when the cost of living goes up, one may think that life becomes cheaper. Then suicide ideation may occur.



**2.3) Coping Method:** In Thailand, since economic crisis, we have learnt from our beloved king the philosophy of sufficient economy. Sufficiency means moderation and enough as the behavioral guidelines for people at all levels, from the family, community till the nation. The ideology urges people to live with patience, diligence, self-awareness, self-reliance, intelligence, and attentiveness. In this way, we can balance and be ready to cope with rapid physical, social, environmental, and cultural changes from both inside and outside the country. Simply speaking, one needs to increase incomes, to cut unnecessary expenses, and to pursue a decent life. However, the coping method on crisis is totally different in South Korea. After the economic downturn, what make South Korea sleepless is not because of the nuclear problem, but the demanding culture asking for more and more qualifications as the protection against the further crisis. The misguided perception of the lofty expectations, added with more pressure through the culture of admiring “over-achievers” and looking down on “losers” make the stress and pressure become intense in South Korea. Nowadays, South Korean life seems to be in a circus of expectations. As the result, those who cannot reach the society’s definitions could easily fall in depression. Since every South Koreans seem to be in the same standard, so what they need is to go beyond. Excelling is not an option, but a MUST. Sometimes it’s hard living for your parents and even harder to meet the social requirement. Till now, South Korea qualifications demand a lot beyond normal standards. Even if you achieved those benchmarks, nothing ends. The expectations keep on growing. And the fear of failure is worrisome because once you experience a failure, the fear of being discovered as a failure is incredibly burdensome. Social value, stress, intense pressure, the breakdown of family structure, all of these can motivate depression. On one hand, thanks for a miserable life since it is the way to discipline South Korean to become a professional including built the potential human resources that could benefit the nation. On the other hand, think about the lost of those valuable human resources due to the created intense stress since those who fail in South Korea may be considered as the genius in other countries.

## 2.4) Culture

Below are the main characteristics between Thais and South Korean.

**Table 1: Differences characteristics between Thais and South Korea**

	<b>Thai People</b>	<b>South Korean</b>
<b>Nature</b>	Indiscipline Impatient Individualism Easy to give up	Well discipline Can-do spirit Collectivism Ambitious / lofty expectation
<b>Unique Style</b>	Reactive Follower Flexible Smile	Proactive Innovative / nationalism Strict Serious
<b>Competition/ Stress/ Pressure</b>	Not much	Intense
<b>Family</b>	Family Tie Dependency	Nuclear Family Independency
<b>Culture</b>	Slow / Leisurely style Performance based	Quick-Quick culture / hard working Seniority based

The above table shows the different characteristic between Thais society and South Korean society. The living style between Thais and South Korean totally stand on opposite pole. Moreover, South Korean is familiar with the aggression as it often shown through nearly all South Korean drama and film. The real life is not so different from what we have seen in drama. Prolonged dealing with aggression created intense stress, rankle, distress, and finally may end up self-harm. Again, South Korean society is totally different from Thai society. The intense stress and pressure can be prevailing seen in South Korea. Everyone is on the competition, self-confident, serious and refuse to lose. So, when they face with the serious trouble, instead of asking for help liked Thai people, South Koreans always choose to solve problem by themselves, which it really difficult to guess that their choosing solutions will be right or wrong. In the same way, parents/adults also do not expect their children to ask help from anyone since they also assume that their children are smart enough to fix it by themselves. In South Korea, there is also a connection between suicide and honor. Many South Korean go through depression because of their uphold pride.

According to The United Nations, 90 percent of suicides caused by mental disorders but socio-cultural and economic pressures play a large part. We have seen a lot of

social changes over the last 40 years and South Korean are having a hard time keeping up with capitalist values. Noticeably, the South Korean showbiz all present the kind of comedy for relieving the South Korean' stresses. Cigarettes and alcohol abuse seem to be another alternative for relieving various daily stresses. The outcome not included only suicide, but also those who died from the leading disease concerning with stress, for example, strokes from stress, lung cancer from smoking, liver cancer from drinking culture, etc. Thus, South Korea could provide more healthy and friendly environment to make South Korea less suicide-prone society.

### **3. Stress Exploring**

Looking at social pressures provides a good starting point. South Korean youth have a huge pressure on achieved-oriented. There is a high level of competition right from childhood. It is common to study outside home after midnight since most South Koreans acknowledge that public education isn't good enough for their children to achieve academic success. Unfortunately, education fever here is itself an inhumane one, many youngster had dedicated the most valuable time of their life hinged on the exam. In 2003, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child pointed the hyper educational environment in South Korea violated the children's "rights to play". Generally speaking, teenager and middle aged are one of the most valuable times in one's entire life. It supposed to be a time to enjoy life. In turn, it is rare to see teenagers climbing mountains, fishing along a river or bicycling in the countryside in South Korea. Such activities are considered useless for a future CSAT test-taker. Listening to MP3 files, SMS and playing computer games are normally seen among the current generation. Sleeping is a popular pastime but a student proverb says "if you sleep for four hours a night, you'll get into the college of your choice - if you sleep for five hours, you fail". Also, university students' stress over gaining enough qualifications to get short-listed at a major company. South Korean employees on average put in the highest number of hours per week among all OECD countries. And after all of that, there is pressure to get married and have a healthy family life. So, we can see the high expectation in all steps of South Korean's life.



#### 4. Age Analysis

**Table 2: Number of suicides by age group and gender, South Korea, 2006**

Age (years)	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	All
<b>Males</b>	15	342	765	1245	1639	1288	1232	723	<b>7249</b>
<b>Females</b>	21	286	492	535	505	352	548	700	<b>3439</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>1257</b>	<b>1780</b>	<b>2144</b>	<b>1640</b>	<b>1780</b>	<b>1423</b>	<b>10688</b>

**Source:** World Health Organization ([http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/media/repkor.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/repkor.pdf))

Risk factors for suicide seem to differ by age and gender. The study found the high suicide rate among men, representing around 68% of all suicides rates in term of number. However, in term of growth, a suicide rate was more evident in women than in men. A women suicide was up to 32 % of all suicides in South Korea. Further, if we take population ratio of 1:1.02 (Male: Female) into consideration, the statistics showed the worried suicide number of both gender. While the high suicide rate among men may related to social disintegration, such as unemployment, divorce, alcohol and drug abuse, and decline in marriage, the women side may related to Confucianism value, and income inequality. Meanwhile, the increase of elderly suicides was attributed to health and financial-related factor. Also, age differences are notable in suicide patterns in South Korea. Police suggest that teenager mainly kill themselves over education problems, middle aged due to economic woes, and seniors because of health problems. From the above table, South Korea suicide rates significantly increased with increasing age. Historically, the elderly over 55 continuously showed the highest suicide rate. However, the younger showed a higher proportional suicide rate compared to older.

ศูนย์วิทยุตำรวจ

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



**Table 3: Suicide among Leading Causes of Death by Age Group, 2005**

Rank	Total	<10	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+
1	MN	TA	TA	Suicide	Suicide	MN	MN	MN	MN	MN
2	CV	MN	Suicide	TA	MN	Suicide	CVD	CVD	CVD	CVD
3	Heart	CM	MN	MN	TA	Liver	Liver	Heart	Heart	Heart
4	Suicide	Accidental	Drowning	Heart	Heart	TA	Heart	DM	DM	CLR
5	DB	Falls	Heart	Drowning	CVD	Heart	Suicide	Suicide	CLR	Hypertensive

**NOTE:**

- **MN:** Malignant Neoplasms
- **CV:** Cerebrovascular Disease
- **DM:** Diabetes Mellitus
- **CM:** Congenital Malformation
- **CLR:** Chronic Lower Respiratory
- **TA:** Traffic Accident

**Source:** KNSO (<http://kostat.go.kr>)

The WHO statistics also marked a steep increase in the number of people in their 20s and 30s taking their own lives, while suicide is in the low rank for aging groups. The high growth of the ungreying suicide is a relatively new phenomenon in South Korea. In conclusion, the increasing suicide rate in South Korea was composed of a greater number of the older group and a greater proportional increase in the younger group. Fortunately, the suicide rate is very rare among children.

**4.1) Elderly suicides:** As South Korea face with a rapidly aging society and rising poverty among pensioners, people aged over 55 being targeted as victims, evidenced by the rising to a record high of 45.3% of the total. More than half of the elderly suicides were related with ill-health, but a sizeable number were due to financial difficulties. The higher elderly dependency ratio and insufficient support from society could possibly lead to the growing number of elderly suicides as more elderly people find themselves isolated, struggling financially and avoiding being burden to the family. There are many reasons behind the very high suicide rate among the aged. While most of them were too old to work, those who work were employed in low-paid jobs and consequently lived in extreme poverty. Compared to other OECD countries, labor market participation by the elderly aged over 65 was much higher in South Korea (30% versus 10% in Sweden and 15% in the USA). The situations seem reversed in the west where less suicide was found among westerner old age since their after retirement means the time for happiness traveling around. In South Korea, the livings were often characterized by frequent family quarrels, desertion by family, and death of the spouse or disobedience of younger family members. So, they were

in the circumstances of poverty, isolation, loneliness, social insecurity and also some form of chronic illness. Also, those conditions were further roused by the poor of social welfare provided by government.

**Table 4: Elderly suicide rate (per 100,000 populations), 1998-2002**

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
<b>Males 65-74</b>	57.8	56.0	45.6	56.6	66.2
<b>Male 75+</b>	81.6	75.7	81.5	91.6	130.5
<b>Female 65-74</b>	18.9	17.5	18.7	20.6	26.1
<b>Female 75+</b>	33.6	29.9	32.4	39.9	61.4

**Sources:** World Health Organization

([http://apps.who.int/whosis/database/mort/table1\\_process.cfm](http://apps.who.int/whosis/database/mort/table1_process.cfm))

From table, a significant increase in suicide rates with increasing aged was observed in both sexes. It could say that there is a relationship between increase life expectancy and increased suicide rates among South Korean. As longevity increased, preparation for old age such as pensions and home care has become more critical for the elderly. At the same time, the younger generation feels less responsible for taking care of their elderly parents. The Confucian ideology of Hyo (filial piety) seemed to weaken in South Korea. Therefore, the quality of life for elderly people may be worse after retirement. This may cause the increase in South Korean elderly suicide.

**4.2) Youth and middle-aged suicides:** Youth suicide appears to become such a common phenomenon that it no longer grabs public attention. Many experts think the sharp rise in adult suicide is influencing the surge seen in child suicide rates. Some believe that insensitive media reports of suicides combined with high-profile coverage of celebrity suicides encourage the copycat trend among the youth. Most youth suicides concern with hyper-education system. Students themselves knew that their parents are spending huge amounts of money for their education and the pressure is enormous. Without hobbies, sports, or activities, the stress of studying takes on twisted forms. Sadly, they spend all their youth learning not much things outside classroom. Therefore, during and after CSAT, there were many student suicides. The stress on these teens is overwhelming. Moreover, many South Korean teens have no support system since most of their life hinged with studying,

and later lead to disconnected and isolated from family and friends. Finally, it ends up with increased risk for teen suicide.

On middle-aged side, the crisis seemed to hit hard to the younger and middle-aged working group. Income inequality has increased sharply after economic downturn. According to the Gini index as a measure of income inequality, the inequality for urban workers remained quite stable up to 1997, but increased obviously after 1998 (0.283 in 1997 to 0.320 in 1999). Labor restructure after the 1997 economic crisis also affected the increase in unemployment rates and part time workers. The changes in the labor structure and job insecurity along with the weak social most likely contribute to the rise in suicide rates among young and middle-aged people in South Korea. Related causes included the rise of divorce rate (crude divorce rate was 1.4 per 1000 in 1994, 2.5 in 1998 and 2.6 in 2005) and the decline in the number of marriages as well as increased late marriage was further accelerated the problem (crude marriage rate went from 9.3 per 1000 in 1990 to 6.5 in 2005). Finally, technology seemed to affect the rise of suicide rate, including Internet or mass media. Wide use of the internet in South Korea may be an important cause of the increase in suicide among the younger and middle-aged. The Internet can be the means to exchange tips about suicide and to bring together people having suicidal thoughts. In short, the pressure to succeed at school and work may be so intensive that young South Koreans are more willing to end their lives.

## **5. Gender Analysis**

**5.1) Women Suicides:** Unfortunately, suicides of South Korean women often regarded as individual matters rather than in a social context. Generally, suicides of fathers are taken as a social issue because men are the breadwinner, but suicides of mothers or women are considered as private and personal matters. Gender inequality seems to be the big issue in Confucius countries. Female suicide is apparently higher in those Confucian nations. Compared to Western Europe, the contrast in suicide rate among women is obvious. The average suicide rate for all of East Asia is 14.04 per 100,000 people, while for Western Europe the average is 6.43 (Korea Times, 06/02/09). Noticeably, most of high profile suicides in South Korea are female. These high suicide rates among women also push South Korea's suicide rate to be high. The trend is not only South Korea, but is shared among its neighbors as



well. South Korea, China, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan hold the top five spots in world suicide rates for women. This is not an accident, but there is something unique in East Asia that lead women to kill themselves in greater numbers. The high rate of women suicide reflects the disadvantaged economic and social position of South Korean women. Also, the conflict between the old conservative values and the modern world leave tension on the women. In this generation, women are caught in the middle. The cause of female suicides may early from roles conflict along with the huge pressure placed on women through Confucian traditions. Women are expected to fit a certain model form, and bounded by moral obligations that locked up in their domestic lives. In addition, a significant gender wage gap also discourages women to enter the workforce. The amount of pressure that women feel in term of appearance, self-esteem, career, and the need to balance all their lives without even flinching-man make it tough living in South Korea. China was a country well-known for the highest rate of suicides among women. The difference is that most Chinese women are not so well-educated, lack resources to lead an independent life, and have little access to state or social support. So, they have no choice just to stay subordinate, while South Korean women were not fall in this category. Most South Korean women are well-educated and even good appearance since everything can change by surgery in South Korea. They can stand on their feet, but what they lack is the social opportunity. Sadly, only just over half of South Korean women with a university degree are in the labor market. Therefore, it is quite useless wasting public investment in human capital, especially in term of women' education if South Korea do not want to utilize women's capabilities. According to OECD, South Korea employment rate in 2008 was 63.8 percent, rank 22<sup>nd</sup>, The rate falls far behind the world average because South Korea has large numbers of housewives, students, including those who give up to find a job.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



**5.2) Men suicides:** The depression is more common in women, but surprisingly, men suicide. Statistically, men are far more likely to take their own lives than women. Moreover, most of men don't ask for help before their death. Therefore, men suicides are somehow complex and ill-understood. However, several pointers share a common feature - the changing role of men in society.

- Hyper-education and military compulsory prolonged adolescence stage. As a result, adulthood and independence came at a much later age than previously. Two generations ago, work began at the age of 14; one generation ago at 16 years for most; now many men only achieve financial independence in nearly their mid 20s.
- More stress dealing with achieving both educational and career goals compared to the past.
- Long time dealing with daily stresses lead to health problems
- Job insecurity and periods of unemployment are the norm for many
- Alcohol use and abuse as an attempt to cope with stress
- Drug abuse has become more common
- Changes in family structure from extended family under one-roof to nuclear family
- The national character to hide their pain / let alone ill
- Boys don't cry culture.
- The cultural stigma attached to mental illness
- The pride of being "MEN" as stated in Confucianism

#### **6. How South Korean suicide is different?**

As the notice of the nation with high suicide rate, South Korea falls in these categories.

- Suicide rate is high among industrialized country.
- The suicide situation will be more serious in those nationalism countries where people are willing to scarify for the nation since suicide seems to be very common and acceptable.
- Country that was previously ruled under dictatorship seems to have the high suicide rate.

- Female suicide is higher in those Confucian nations apparently.

In conclusion, below is the special characteristic of South Korean suicides.

- The rise of suicide rate reversed with the decrease in total mortality rate.
- During economic downturn, suicide affects more on Asians than the west.
- Among Asians, South Korea's suicide rate is inversed with the economic recovery. According to World Health Organization figures, rates of suicide in South Korea doubled to 26.1 deaths per 100,000 people between 1996 and 2008. South Korea's suicides increased with no sign of downward trend even economic recovery. Thailand showed the rise of suicide rate with a downward trend when economic recovery. Singapore and Taiwan, which sustained modest losses from the 1997 financial crisis, showed no suicide spikes from 1998 through 2006.
- Suicide is less during economic poverty, but more frequent when prosperity, lengthy economic recession, or even sudden economic growth.
- The poor are less inclined to suicide than those in more secure status.
- Women are first to layoff, but men suicide
- More suicides are found among South Korean old age after retirement period, while the westerners enjoy after retirement with less suicide.
- **Confucianism value:** Men suicides deal with dignity of being breadwinner while women suicides deal with being subordinate.
- The circus of expectation deal with South Korea's insufficient life and too demanding culture. So, those who fail in South Korea may be considered as the genius in other countries.
- In the west, the sense of self-worth is encouraged; "Who cares what someone else think about you?" Unfortunately, it is unacceptable in collective society liked South Korea.
- Because of group-oriented value, it's easy to extract cooperation in collectivism society liked South Korea, evidenced by the popular trend such as the Olympics or the World Cup. On another side, this trend makes many South Koreans lemmings in case of suicide. Therefore, copycat is more worried since there is a high tendency for South Korean to imitate.

- **Internet Harassment:** Due to the seniority system, it could be the pressure for South Korean to use internet as the place to express their indeed feelings. Therefore, in South Korea, the internet culture is more violent and vicious than most other countries since people don't respect each other in cyberspace.
- **“Bali-Bali Culture” (Quick-Quick Culture)** links with South Korea's inability to hold. Supported with the fastest of internet hi-speed and the South Korean metal tableware that was create not easy to break, it can imply how hot-tempered South Korean was. These made it harder for South Korea to deal with the fallout from the increased stress levels and higher mental health problems induced by the lengthy recession.
- **Challenging Lover:** In the past, there are many opportunity to die, so it is challenging to be alive. But now, with the progress medicine and advance technology leading to prolonged life expectancy, there is no more challenging to be alive. Adding with high social pressure, that makes their lives not worth living. Noticeably, suicide is less frequently in the past when South Korea was in the serious poverty. When death is easy in the past, people avoid dying. Till in modern days, when they can really avoid death, people turn to despair leading their lives.
- **Can-do spirit:** Everyone is on the competition, self-confident, serious and refuse to lose. So, the price of failure is too much to bear.
- Even South Koreans are in extreme poverty, the illegal crime, thieves, and robberies are not the options for them. That's why suicide is prevailing seen in South Korea.
- Prolonged dealing with aggression and serious practice on seniority created intense stress, rankle, distress, and finally may end up self-destruction.
- **Ashamed culture:** One's failure is not the individual failure, but families as well. In South Korea, there is a tradition of committing suicide in order to preserve one's family honor.
- According to The United Nations, 90 percent of suicides caused by mental disorders. Unfortunately, there is stigma attached to mental illness in South Korea.



- It is uncommon to ask for help in South Korea. Instead of asking for help liked Thai people, South Koreans always choose to solve problem by themselves.
- **Faked death:** Instead of well-being, South Korea is now crazy on "well-dying" trend. Under the concept of "When death is a reminder to live", fake death program was set for people to experience death, and make them value more on life. South Korean corporations - from Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motor to Kyobo Life Insurance and Mirae Asset Management , send their employees on take this course regularly at the cost of 300 US dollars each, partly as a suicide prevention measure as well as to encourage them to question their priorities in life. Now, the course is become an integral part of training at Samsung and Kyobo that they have even built their own fake funeral centers. International companies including ING and Allianz have also sent their staff on the courses. The fake death represents the heavy pressure in South Korea's society.
- **Suicide Insurance:** In South Korea, the insurers pay the death benefits for suicides for those who kill themselves under the condition of 2 years after signing up. Interestingly, the country's three largest life insurers; Samsung, Kyobo and Korea Life said that "They paid 192.4 billion won in death benefits for suicides in fiscal year 2008 up 9.8 percent from the previous year. The number of such insurance claims also rose 4.9 percent to 1,685 cases in the one-year period from April 2008 to March 2009" (Korea Times, 05-17-2009).
- Finally, the modernization can totally change the external look of South Korea in term of materialism, but internally, South Korea keep on dragging its cultural heritage; that is Confucianism from the pre-modern era.

As above unique characteristics make South Korea's suicide becomes different.

### 9. Method of Suicide in South Korea

In 1990s, poisonous substances are the most common method of suicide. Around 40% of suicides are committed by this method. There were differences in substances



used among men and women. Men tend to use more toxic substances like pesticides and poisonous chemicals. On the other hand, women used less toxic substances like prescribed medication and household chemicals. The second most common method is hanging with around 30% of all suicides committed. However, hanging rate was rising continuously since 1991 and obviously during the economic crisis. In 1996-1998, hanging became the most common way of suicide, followed by poisoning and jumping respectively. That means the financial crisis have an effect on the method of suicide since hanging is the cheapest way to commit suicide. Noticeably, most of high-profile suicides applied hanging as their suicide method which coincides with the recent finding. Other methods include setting oneself to fire, drowning, stabbing and so on. However, very few use these methods. In addition, South Korea restricts private ownership of firearms by law, so suicides by guns are rare in South Korea compared to other developed countries. Interestingly, that means the difficulty in accessibility have an effect with the method of suicides as well.

The linked problem seems to be concealment of suicides, chiefly for economic and psychological rather than religious reasons. As family prestige mainly depends on power and wealth, South Korean conceals suicides in order to maintain the family's reputation. Logically, suicides may directly hurt the family in form of marriage ability of the children as well as social ranking. So, medical men find good excuse to list a suicide as an accident in order to avoid a grieving and distraught family from further harassment by authorities. Also, there is a stigma associated with depression for South Korea. Maybe, some of the increase in mortality from accidental drowning and falls during the economic crisis might be attributable to the concealment of suicide.

### **8. High-Profile Suicides Analysis**

There cannot be any country in the world that has more celebs' suicide than South Korea. During the past several years, the continuous list of high profile suicide has left everyone wondering why. It sounds weird that those who completely have everything; fame, work, money, will think about suicide. Interestingly, these kinds of celebrities seemed not to have any serious trouble at all, but why they think that their pain is too unbearable and finally end up suicide as the way to fix-it. Behind the ever-cheerful image and smile lies the dark side of a star. It is difficult to predict that which one is in depression, and who was in depth depression till committed suicide.

Many of superstars' suicide linked with the pressure and stress that come with fame. Most of them are jumping too fast into the superstar status. Of course, after the initial brush with success, more expectations are demanding by you, family, company and the society. As the result, they are always being treated so well like a prince/princess from their company/manager and be adored by the surrounding people. Everything seem to be happy since those superstars seem to run life as the fairy tale, but think in another side, that also make them have less skills in handling with their personal problems. Another is that being star also means being caught by the public eyes. Whenever they cannot be as social defined, the feeling of failure came into their mind. Added with the lack of religion, that could easily lead them to the wrong exit. In short, they lose their identity. Like one South Korean celebrity put it in her suicide note. "I've lost myself. Don't remember who I was but that's it in a nutshell." It seems to match with the South Korea celebs' suicide trend these days. There's no balance in the lives. Thus the price of failure is too much to bear than average people. The failure is not just failing themselves, but often a family and social failure as well. For many South Korean, suicide perhaps seemed to be the only means to escape the expectations of a demanding culture. Compared with America, those superstars had been dealing with the prolonged fame like Britney Spears, Lindsey Lohan, Paris Hilton, they all just deteriorate themselves into their former selves by getting drunk and use drugs abuse in order to escape the problems instead of committing suicide. Not that America's way is better, but we can obvious see the differences of how the celebrities deal with being famous. Actually, the suicide situation in South Korea isn't just for those who are high-profile. South Korea has also been hit with a rise of suicides among common people as well. Much news of everyday-citizens taking their own lives is commonly seen in the newspaper. Therefore, this chapter will pick up the South Korean' high profile suicides during 2000-2009 as the representative case studies in order to clearly understand their frustration and factor affecting suicide vary by people.

## 9. Case studies on high profile' suicides

Table 5: Table of High-Profile Suicides

2005:	
2007:	 
2008:	   
2009:	    

### Case Studies # 1: Lee Eun-Joo, Aged 24, Death: Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005

Actress Lee Eun-joo, 24, was found hanged with a belt while her wrists were slit in her apartment on February 22, 2005. She was believed to suffer depressed and insomnia. Her suicide note is written by her own blood said "Mom, I am sorry and I love you." Another note said "I wanted to do too much. Even though I live, I'm not really alive. I don't want anyone to be disappointed. It's nice having money... I wanted to make money." Her friends and family blamed the suicide on her nude scenes she had done in the movie, "The Scarlet Letter". Another unconfirmed rumor is that her mother's gambling debts, abuse, and criticism led to her depression and eventual suicide.

Lee first came to public attention as a model for school uniforms. Later, she appeared in TV dramas such as Start and KAIST, followed with her film debut in the award-winning Rainbow Trout. Also, Lee starred in popular and well-received films like A Bungee Jumping of Their Own, A Virgin Stripped Bare by her Bachelors,



Lover's Concerto, and Taegukgi. She gained the most popularity on the television drama Firebird. Her performances were equally well-welcomed, and she was one of the most popular and respected actresses working in South Korea. However, many of her recent films were critical for making box office disappointments.

Her final film role as the mistress of a detective in the movie, "The Scarlet Letter" has been cited as a contributing factor in her depression. Some reports said, "She was very uncomfortable with the sexually explicit nature of her role in The Scarlet Letter." Many actresses have found her reputation stained for playing characters whose morals do not match the mainstream standard. In South Korea, if a woman appears sexually in a movie or ads, she is demoted in the social hierarchy and carries a stigma with her. The same applies to divorced women, yet no such stigma applies to men. Compare this with the situation in the west, where women can stroll topless on the beach, are treated equally at work and receive the caring support of husband with regards to child rearing and housework. Sadly, that FREEDOM is real in the west, but not in South Korea. And that is why many actresses, such as Eun-kyeong Shin and Jin-shil Choi, avoid taking inappropriate roles when they get married.

However, it is hard to believe that the alleged nude scenes from The Scarlet Letter caused her depression since she was not new to nude scenes. She got involved in several similar roles on "A Virgin Stripped Bare by her Bachelors", as well as "A Bungee Jumping of Their Own". Despite this, Lee's reputation was remarkably unstained, and many fans still considered her as "pure." That would be because of her ability to balance the inflammatory role with the conventional characters. However, in "Scarlet Letter", she was performed beautifully. Even the scenes were obscene, but it did not actually expose any of her private body parts. By contrast, her movie Virgin Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors had more nude scenes. As the actresses, they are expected to be prepared for this kind of scenes. Logically, if she felt that such a scene would cause her depressed, she probably refuse taken the role. Although some desperate actresses need to perform nude scenes in order to get a short-cut recognition, Lee was not considered within those groups since she had already proved her talent in one of the top movies in South Korean cinema, Taegukgi. So, there was no need for her to act in a movie that she feel uncomfortable with. Of course, we are not taking into account the compulsory pressure from her agency. Also, it doesn't make sense that she would commit suicide for such a



reason, especially since most people thought the scenes that she performed were very appropriate for the movie.

Moreover, looking from her external look, she did not seem to have the aggressive personality liked slit her wrist and wrote such a letter with blood. Surely, if there is some stain in her life, there is still nothing wrong since all human beings are all born imperfect. The mistakes always happen in human lives. And, she still had so much to live for. She had a new drama that she already signed on to, along with some new ads as well. Even Lee got concern on her latest role, her reputation likely to have remained intact. She was still accepted as a real and respected actress, on the A-list and was in a position strong enough to take on a wide variety of characters. Many South Koreans really loved and admired her acting. Moreover, she had just graduated from Dankook University a few days before her death. So, it's difficult to understand why a woman with so much potential liked Lee giving it all up for something as a nude scene. Maybe criticisms in sexually explicit role are especially harsh for her to handle with.

#### **Case Studies # 2: U;nee: Aged 26, Death: Jan. 21<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

U;Nee, 26, a young singer with successful career was found hanged from a door frame in her home in Incheon. Her death shocked fans who were waiting for her third albums. Police announced the case appeared to be suicide. The singer left no suicide note, making her decision a mystery. The police found U;Nee in her regular sweats. U-Nee also met with her company to discuss the concept of her music video the night of her suicide and she was expected to film her MV on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. She was perceived as a bright and an outgoing person, which makes her suicide even more surprising. According to U;Nee's close friend Min Young (member of Diva), "U;Nee received some treatment for her depression, but she did not go consistently which worsen her condition". On the other hand, U;Nee's mom thought that she was better after she took her medication and she did not notice any change in her behavior. Her close people believed that U;Nee had been suffering from depression, but she was able to hide her stress well. Her third album is due for release on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007. People have speculated U;Nee was suffering from the huge pressure associated with the release of the new album and was upset by online attacks.

U;Nee born to an un-wed mother, and suffered a difficult childhood. According to KBS talk show in 2005, she said, "I lived with just my grandmother when I was a child. It was really hard to live without a father." She came to public attention under the name Lee Hye-ryeon with her debut in the KBS TV drama "Grown-ups Just Don't Understand" in 1996. She appeared in the movie "Seventeen" in 1998 and later in TV dramas "Theme Game" and "Tears of the Dragon". Then she changed her name to U;Nee in 2003 to release her first album. It was a rough start for the new singer, but she began to gain popularity after releasing her second album, "Call Call Call." Her sexy dance and revealing fashions made her the favorite of teenagers across Asia.

Her depression was expressed on display at her Web site posting that "I feel everything is empty. I am again walking down a path to reach a destination that I don't know." U;Nee's death was stirred with her online fans. Many fans visited her home page for leaving condolences caused the computer server to overload. Within an hour of her death being known, nearly 3,000 messages were posted on her homepage. Most posters expressed shock that the singer would kill herself before her launching album. Many expressed condolences such as, "May she rest in peace in Heaven." Na sun-Young of Lifeline Korea, which provides a telephone counseling service aimed at preventing suicides said "Following the death of Yuni, I received many calls from young people said they themselves were thinking about committing suicide because even someone as beautiful as Yuni couldn't stand it and committed suicide." Also, she noted that in March 2005, a wave of copycat suicides hit South Korea in month after 24-year-old film star, Lee-Eun-Joo took her own life.

### **Case Studies # 3: Jeong Da-bin, Aged 27, Death: Feb. 10th, 2007**

Later, Actress Jeong Da-Bin, 27, was found hanged with a towel wrapped around her neck in the bathroom of her boyfriend's apartment in Seoul. Police said, "She was obviously depressed from a recent shortage of work." Her boyfriend, Lee, said "He took Jeong back to his house because she got drunk while hanging out with friends at a nearby bar." While no apparent suicide note was left behind, observers say Jeong seems to have been suffering from depression. Quoting her comments posted on her personal blog, titled "Finished" said, "I'm complicated and I feel like I'm going to die...I have lost my identity." A woman named Jang, who had been drinking with

Jeong, said “Jeong invited friends to her house the day after tomorrow, and she showed great determination about her acting career.”

Jeong Da-Bin was mostly known for her leading role in drama “Cat in Rooftop,” and the movie “The Guy was Cool.” Unfortunately, her career went down since then. She underwent massive plastic surgeries as a desperate attempt to restore it, but it brought her more criticisms than fame. Then, she was caught in a legal dispute with her former management company about her contract. Furthermore, her mom was suffered with cancer a year ago. Jeong Da Bin definitely had a hard time. The police suspect that she committed suicide considering there was no sign of murder. On the other hand, Jeong’s new management agency claimed that her death was not suicide and is requested for reinvestigation. Sedona Media's Director, Park Hyun said “There was some hint of foul play. There was no reason for her to commit suicide. All of the problems were getting solved. There are no traces that she got drunk at her boyfriend's house. The day before the accident Jeong Dabin with 4 people including her boyfriend shared 6 bottles of Soju and beer. Jeong paid the bill and there was an employee's statement that she wasn't so drunk. A scar on Jeong’s wrist was not from a suicide attempt in October 2006, as his boyfriend had mentioned, but a wound she received in her first year in high school. The problems with her former company were almost solved.” Director Park continued, “There was 2 months left until her former manager was going to be sued. The lawsuits with her former company; one was decided as immaterial and the other one was decided as compensation. Everything was getting solved smoothly.” He added that the actress showed strong determination on her new piece of work. Moreover, her next work was decided and she was in the midst of picking other pieces too. Besides, she loved her family a lot. Also, she made hospital appointments with close acquaintances and promised to go on a trip with Jung Sun Hee and other celebs. Two days later, she also planed to hang out with the same gang. In addition, she showed disappointment towards U;nee's suicide including commented how suicide was bad with her coordinator and her boyfriend, and said “I will never commit suicide and try to live harder.”



**Case Studies # 4: Ahn Jae-hwan: Aged 36, Sep. 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

Actor Ahn Jae-hwan, 36, was found dead in the back seat of a black van on September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008. Eye-witnesses saw his car parked unmoved for the past two weeks. The body was already in a decomposition state when found. The police assumed that he died on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, but his remains were not discovered until September 8<sup>th</sup>. He left home for a month with his whereabouts unknown. The police assumed that he gassed himself in his car in order to end his life. Two empty bottles of soju and two charcoal blocks for heating was found inside his van. One of charcoal block was burnt which probably contributed to his death.

Ahn Jae Hwan and wife Jung Sun Hee was one of the famous “celebrity couples” in the South Korean entertainment industry and had just get married last November, 2007 after dating for just three months. His suicide is speculated as the result of his repeated failures in businesses. Many media reported that he was struggling with mounting debts. He was threatened by loan sharks after he failed to repay debts that may have amounted between 3 billion won to 6 billion won (\$2.4 million to \$4.8 million). Back to May 2008, Ahn was forced to stop production on his movie project, entitled, “Icing” due to a lack of funds and dispute between production staff. In addition, he also had cosmetics business invested with his wife that were not going well. He needed at least half a million dollars of investment to re-run his business. Some speculated the cause of bankruptcy with the statement of his wife, Jung Sun Hee in April, 2008 which was indirectly linked by netizens to the mad cow protests, leading to a torrent of abuse directed at the couple. It subsequently led to Jung Sun Hee being suspended and Ahn Jae Hwan’s business to suffer, eventually leading to bankruptcy. He left behind a suicide note donating his body if found right away. Also, he was apologized his parents for leaving first and left a few words for his wife stating that he loves her.

**Case studies # 5: Choi Jin Sil, Aged 39, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008**

Shortly after the death of Ahn Jae-hwan, actress Choi Jin Sil, 39, apparently hanged herself with a rope made of medical bandages at her Seoul home. She had left no suicide note. According to South Korean news reports, Choi became depressed when rumors started circulating. In late September, an employee at a Seoul securities house started posting rumors about Choi in a chat room accusing her as

being a heartless loan shark responsible for the suicide of her fellow actor, Ahn Jae-hwan to repay her a debt accumulated more than \$2 million before he took his own life in September, 2008. Within days, the speedy wide-spread of internet hate inundated attacks on Choi's morals and character. Even the rumors were fabricated; the chat-room allegation was more than Choi could bear. "I am lonely and I am ostracized," she wrote in her diary. "I cannot even breathe." After enduring the accusations, finally, she was found dead in the bathroom of her Seoul home on Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008. Her suicide has grasped the huge nation's attention, dominating big headlines, authorities, and even the government tried to find out what went wrong. According to the investigative team, Choi killed herself in a "momentary impulse" driven by malicious rumors and prolonged stress.

Looking at her profile, she had a lot to live for. Choi was one of the South Korea's most famous movie stars for two decades, and the mother of two young children. Unbelievably, the tides of Internet bombarded rumors can turn quickly and mercilessly hurt her. As the "nation's actress", Choi starred in some 16 movies and more than a dozen TV soap operas throughout the 1990s. Everything seems smooth until 2002; her career took a hit when her troubled marriage and subsequent divorce from Cho Sung Min, the big leagues baseball player in Japan was revealed to the public. Naturally, South Korea society does not like strong women, and regarded single moms as personality disorder. Therefore, after her divorce in 2004, Choi became somehow expelled from producers and broadcasters who were still reluctant to put single mothers starring as the prominent roles. Even her hard attempt to speak openly on the taboo topic and sought to change the unpopular public perception of single moms in South Korea, it seemed didn't help. Lee Mijeong, a fellow at the Korean Women's Development Institute said "There is still a negative notion about single moms." Park Soo Na, a national entertainment columnist commented single mothers often ask their parents to raise their grandchildren so the kids don't have to endure the shame of living without a father. As the result of her apparent suicide, she has become a symbol of the difficulties women face in the conservative yet technology-oriented society liked South Korea. Continuously online gossip appears to have been largely to blame for her death. But it's also clear that public life as a single, working, divorced mom still an unorthodox status in South Korea. It was a role she had a lot of trouble with.

**Case studies # 6: Jang Chae-won, Aged 26, Death: October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008**

Again, the South Korean public is shocked with the departure of celebrity suicides. In just one week, three South Korean actors are dead from apparent suicides. In the week following the suicide of popular actress, Choi Jin-sil, two homosexual entertainers also took their own lives. According to a police investigator, the 39-year-old Choi Jin-sil, hanged herself in her Seoul home on Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup>. The next day, 26-year-old transgender entertainer, Jang Chae-won was found dead under similar circumstances. And on Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>, Kim Ji-hoo was found hanged in his bedroom. Kim and Jang were a few of those who showed up as openly gay and transsexual celebrities in South Korea. Unfortunately, there are still attached taboos on homosexuality and transexuality in South Korea society.

Jang Chae-won, 26, hung herself in the bathroom of her home in Seoul, one day after Choi's death. She was distressed after breaking up with her boyfriend on the day of her death. According to Jang's friend, "After hearing the news of Choi's death, Jang said that she could understand Choi." Police concluded that the direct cause of the suicide was the breakup with her boyfriend, but also suspect Choi's death had affected her suicide decision. Perhaps the signs were there in advance; Jang started posting messages on her personal blog on September, 2008 liked "Will the end of my life be a comedy or a tragedy?", "Life is really tiresome," and "I wish everything would go the way I wanted." Finally, her last note posted on the day of her suicide stated, "Mom, I'm sorry. I'll do better next time."

Jang Chae-won became talk of the town in 2004 when she appeared on SBS television program, "Truth Game" as a cross-dressing man who was noted that even much prettier than several women. In the program, panelists were asked to guess who has had undergone plastic surgery among the participants. Jang had acted as 'a young woman,' and the panelists misjudged him as a woman at that time due to his feminine appearance, delicate face line, soft skin and other woman-like features. Three years later, she took on a sex change operation and began to appear in the public eye once again on the same show, but now as a woman. During the show, Jang disclosed as a being transgender. Shortly after the broadcast, Jang emerged as a popular 'search' word on the Internet and Jang's mini-homepage (<http://cyworld.nate.com/my5425>) has been rushed by hundreds of thousands of



netizens. She has not appeared on other shows since then, but still has gained public attention, being called the “second Harisu,” a famous transgender entertainer who also changed sex from male to female.

#### **Case Studies # 7: Kim Ji-Hoo, Aged 23, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008**

At the age of 23, Kim Ji-hoo committed suicide just because he got harassed through Internet for being gay. Kim was an actor and model who entered public life in 2007 after appearing in a fashion show. He was a guest on the MBC television drama, “Before and After Plastic Surgery”, and the family sitcom, “The Unstoppable High Kick”. Latest, Kim appeared on tvN's cable reality program, “Coming Out”, where he came out as a gay. He was found hanged on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 08. Following his public disclosure of his sexual orientation, Kim's management agency did not renew his contract and many TV programs and fashion shows canceled his appearances. His blog was full with numerous assaulted messages condemning his sexual orientation. Police confirmed his death as suicide, and said “His suicide reflects public prejudice toward homosexual and their difficulty in succeeding in the entertainment industry.” His suicide note stated, "I'm lonely and in a difficult situation. Please cremate my body."

Actually, there is nothing wrong for being gay. Everybody have their own way of life, and it is supposed to be ourselves to choose the direction of our lives, not others. If it was wrong, that's because South Korea is incredibly homophobic where the traditional sexism was deeply rooted through Confucianism. You can rarely find openly gays since it must be secretive being gay in South Korea. The cornerstone of South Korean culture pressures everyone to get married and have children. Every South Korean should follow the pattern of life in order to gain acceptance in South Korea. Therefore, many South Korean gays marry and have families. It's quite ridiculous, and later could create the worse problem affecting both personal and family. Evidenced by many gay bars at Itaewon Street, this can show that there are the number of secretive South Korean gay which we can found at gay bar during weekend night. However, the situation is totally different to Thailand where homosexual is easily found on the street. Thailand was one of the most accepting countries for homosexuality.

**Case Studies # 8: Kim Seok-Kyun, Aged 30, Death: January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

A 30 year-old, Kim Seok-kyun was found dead in his home on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2009, having committed suicide through hanging. He left behind a note saying, "I'm sorry to my family. Please forgive me." Sadly, his death is making news not so much because he is not so well-known. An internet search reveals almost nothing about his work. Kim got a late start on his acting career with a short film when he was 26. He followed with several more shorts, but had remained largely unknown. It's speculated that his suicide came from the depression over his stagnant career including a series of failed film and musical auditions.

**Case Studies # 9: Jang Ja Yeon: Aged 27, Death: March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

The scarlet actress and model, Jang Ja Yeon was found dead on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2009. She hung herself from a railing along the stairs in her home in Bundang. Police confirmed her death as suicide. Her suicide has sent shockwaves across South Korea. Almost one million fans visited her website in the 48 hours after her death. Her close friends revealed that she probably got depressed. One day before her death, Jang said "She was very tired and wanted to die." Jang were orphaned at a young age. Back up with Jang's sister statement said, "Jang had been suffering from depression since their parents' death in a car accident ten years ago." While she appeared cheerful and bubbly, Jang was scared to be alone. Her depression turned worse recently and prior to her suicide, Jang often locked herself in room. She starred in the popular television drama "Boys Over Flowers," as a tricky schoolgirl, and was also awaiting the release of her first two films when she died. Though her drama was criticized for the weak plot, and need to pay huge funds to secure ads placements, it gained a number of adoring fans. She began earning a lot of recognition for her minor roles in several movies and TV dramas. Her career life seems so bright.

A seven-pages letter written by Jang expressing the longstanding exploitation of female actress to seal deals and forge business relations. The emerging scandal has also implicated the powerful individuals in South Korea's media and entertainment circles. In the letter, Jang describes her distress at repeatedly forced by her agent, Kim Sung-hoon, to have sex with several influential figures, some her father's age or older, and threatened violence if she refused to have sex with them. The executive

names haven't been revealed yet, and it turns out that people are more eager to know the alleged list of the men whom she was forced to have sex with rather than actually paying attention to the substance of her death. Finally, police have launched a probe into 12 individuals named in Jang's letter. Online bloggers and women's groups ask for protection for those on the list. According to the report, her suicide note suggested that Jang felt like a prostitute. "I was called to a bar and pressured to accept a request for a sexual relationship. I am a powerless young actress who can't fix what is so evidently wrong," said Jang. Even how much she wanted to reveal her suffering experiences, no one she can trust, police, lawyers, media, her entertainment agency, everyone is connected by this circle of power. It's a tragic cycle in the South Korean entertainment industry.

As in case of Jang, she can easily fall into depression due to the insecurity on their potential fame or success or lack thereof. In South Korea, it's difficult struggling to be actor/actress. In many circumstances, the actress will meet the VIP alone, who hints at casting her, introducing her to another VIP or sponsoring her lavish lifestyle. And, this is a part of the process of being a star. According to Jang's accusation, the exploitation abuse and the slave contracts exchange for their fames seem to affect celebs suicides. This is the same situation with Dongbangsin-gi who also came out to the public against their agents for over-exploitation including asking the company to re-new the fair contract. Since entertainment is dealing with the enormous amount of benefit, exploitation and abuse is the dirty secret of the entertainment industry globally. Hollywood, Thais' entertainment industry, and frankly, everywhere else also in particular faced with this kind of situation.

#### **Case Studies #10: Woo Seung-yeon: Aged 24, Death: April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

Woo Seung-yeon, a 24-year-old rookie actress, was found hanged in her closet on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at her Southern Seoul home. The suicide is believed to deal with depression. A family member revealed that she had recently received treatment at a hospital for her depression, but it had worsened in recent weeks and caused her to commit suicide. She is known to have been suffering from depression after failing a number of auditions for her new roles recently and also the breaking up with her long time boyfriend. Her five-line suicide note to her family said, "I love my family. I'm sorry I'm leaving before you." Police said, "It seems that a combination of fear of the



future and depression about her current situation led to Woo's suicide." Woo Seung-yeon started off as the top five internet uljjang. After that she began her life as a model, and then as the actress. She had earned recognition for her minor roles in several movies and dramas. She appeared in the movie, "Herb" and the mobile sitcom, "Yap". Her most recent role was in the film, "Private Eye", which was launched in early April 2009, shortly before her death.

### **Case Studies #11: Ex-President, Roh Moo-Hyun: Aged 63, Death: May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009**

It stressed the worse situation when the ex-president, Roh Moo Hyun also committed to suicide. In South Korea, Roh is the highest profile of recent suicides of public figures. President Roh is only the third political leader who took his own life in the past 100 years (the others are Adolf Hitler and former Chilean President Salvador Allende). Roh committed suicide in the midst of investigation for his corruption on May 23<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Actually, the scandal against Roh was not the worst cases against a South Korean president. Back to 1997, two South Korean ex-presidents were also convicted of pocketing hundreds millions of dollars in bribes. Chun Doo-hwan, president from 1981-1988, was fined \$270 million, while Roh Tae-woo, leader from 1998-1993, was fined \$350 million. Though these two ex-presidents were much more highly corrupt and face the hard time of condemnation than Roh, they don't kill themselves. However, if we compare further with the Former President George W. Bush who had to responsible for the deaths of over 4,000 U.S. soldiers as a result of his command to invade Iraq, but turn out find no threat to the U.S. Yet, Bush still made jokes about not finding harming weapons in Iraq and allow the history to judge him. In term of criticism, Bush certainly got the vicious comments; of course, not only from U.S. citizen, but overflowed from all around the world condemning his actions. The case of Bush seems to be a lot heavier than Roh. However, Bush still enjoy spending his splendid life as the honorable ex-president of America, even he was blamed and hate by billions of people all over the world or even ashamed from be hit by a shoe during his speech. But why was Roh different?

President Roh was clearly in trouble. He was depressed by the jailing of his brother and the prosecution of his wife and son who were found guilty of corruption as well. According to theory, Roh's suicide appears to have been driven by a mix of the two motivations, both psychological and situational. Roh ultimately could not cope

with his family's transgressions or the politics of revenge. In a suicide note to his family, Roh described his life as "difficult" and was sorry for making "too many people suffer." Roh said "He was ashamed about the scandal and in the first round of questioning, he lost face including was upset for disappointing his supporters." It seemed like he wanted to relieve the burden he felt he is on others. In South Korea, suicide is a culturally acceptable way to escape failure or disgrace, and Roh had made it clear that he was "overwhelmed by shame."

He chose to jump from the Owl Rock. His suicide method could convey some meanings about the rise and fall of Roh. He chose to climb to the top, and jump down to the earth which is same as his life that climbed up to the highest position as the nation's leader and drop with the shameful allegation from the corruption investigation in 2006. Look at Roh's profile, Roh seems like quite an amazing man with the exceptional life from the exceptional circumstances. And now everything is over. His clean profile must be in stain just because of the corruption. It seems like his outstanding character assassinated himself. In Roh case, money and status really mean little when faced with overwhelming stress. South Koreans are too proud with their dignity. Witnessed by the news report, the fighting among those honorable South Korean politicians in the holy parliament was frequently presented to the public. That's because South Koreans cannot lose faces and also stemmed from long time getting familiar with violence.

The suicide of ex-president, Roh has in turn attracted the huge attention on the suicide phenomenon in South Korea. Almost every newspaper worldwide rolled out alarming statistics on the South Korea's suicide rate, the highest in the developed world. Whether former South Korean President Roh guilty or not, he should have been an exemplary leader and faced the consequences. To the westerners, suicide is the ultimate step of a coward and a completely selfish act. In collectivist societies, like South Korea, where a person's identity is more tied closely to the groups, suicides can be seen as the ultimate way to rebuild or re-clean the image. In South Korea, there is a tradition of committing suicide in order to preserve one's family honor. The ashamed culture in South Korea has a severe effect and cannot be compromised. South Korea has a strong belief in dignity. Those who make themselves or families lose face will feel ashamed all through their life. It's totally different in Thailand where everything is flexible and can be compromised. That's why

we can see many corrupted politicians still spend luxury life without feeling ashamed. However, suicides have a ripple effect and left suffering for the loved that left behind, not only family, but the surrounding people as well. As a result of his suicide, he left a big mess for South Korea's current president to clean up, since President Lee and South Korea's Supreme Prosecutor's Office are being targeted as having caused Roh's suicide.

### **Case Studies #12: Daul Kim, Aged 22, Death: November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

South Korean supermodel, the twenty-two-year-old Daul Kim was found hanged in her central Paris apartment. She was raised in Seoul and in Singapore. She began modeled in Asia, appearing in several articles in South Korean Vogue, before making her fashion week debut in Paris two years ago. Kim was a regular on the catwalks of London, Milan, New York, and Paris, modeled clothes from leading designers Chanel, Dries Van Noten and Alexander McQueen.

The last entry on her popular blog "I Like To Fork Myself" posted a day before her death -- was headlined "Say hi to forever" and had a link to a video of the song "I Go Deep" by British singer Jim Rivers. Friends said that "Kim was in a fragile emotional state and suffered from the pressure of her career." The Internet was flooded with speculation that the pressures of the hyper-competitive modeling world. Eating disorders and drug abuse are common in the fashion industry. In a blog entry on October 30<sup>th</sup>, Kim complained after a modeling stint in Seoul that she was "Getting mad depressed and overworked." In another posting, she expressed that "The more I gain the lonelier it is ... I know I'm like a ghost." In one of her early posts, she wrote: "My life as Daul was so sad and lonely. Join me in my solitude in another world." Actually, Daul's case is out of the research scope, however, the researcher think that we can learn the frustration and feeling expressed through her diary. Below is some significant part of Daul's diary;

- 'Honestly, I've been in hell'
- **November 18** "Say hi to forever"
- **November 15** "Oh but how lonely it is. then and now"
- **October 31** "I think this year I will remember today as the day I slept 10 hours without any help of anything or anyone without any dreams and



woke up feeling peaceful and happy. No more running away from something or someone or myself.”

- **October 30** “I was getting mad depressed and overworked in Seoul. ppl tell me to do something, and i do it, and then they always tell me don’t do anything. and when i don’t do anything they also tell me to do something”
- **October 29** “What are you doing for Halloween.....nothing special I’m already a monster”
- **October 26** “So many times I almost jumped but didn’t”
- **October 15** “My life is so god damn predictable its disgusting”
- **October 10** “So imagine . . . how much stress I get from work honestly I’ve been in hell last few weeks”
- **September 25** “I wore high high heels and short short skirts to hide my depression and weakness tried to hide my loneliness by hornyness”
- **August 22** “I need to learn how to stop destroying myself and be nice to myself”

**Source:** [www. liketoforkmyself.blogspot.com](http://www.liketoforkmyself.blogspot.com)

From the case studies, we can obviously see that most celebs’ suicides are females; the youth and middle aged are most at risk. There have been numerous celebrities who have decided to take their own lives. The reasons for suicides range from criticisms from internet attack, the lack of work, depression, financial trouble, the uphold dignity till the explosion a dirty secret about South Korea’s entertainment industry. Therefore, it is not easy and requires sensitivity in dealing with such a delicate subject as suicide. Each case of suicide has a number of complex personal issues. Situations seem to need time for change. More danger is the next generation, what they have learn in adult world will also be absorbs to the children as well.

## CHAPTER V

### FACTORS ANALYSIS

#### 1. Factors Analysis

As suicide overview mentioned in chapter 4, this chapter will discuss the key socio-economic and demographic changes affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea through the represented variables in each factors.



**Table 6: Represented variables**

No.	Factors	Variables	Meaning
1	Demographic	Child dependency rate Aged dependency rate	Stress and pressure on working population
2	Economic	GDP per capita Unemployment	Buffering capacity toward adverse events Life difficulty
3	Social	Crude marriage rate Crude divorce rate	Change in social safety net

#### 1.1. Demographic factor

As stated in research problem, the rapid increase of elderly will lead to a higher elderly dependency ratio. Moreover, insufficient support in society possibly affects the rise of suicide rate among old people, as well as working aged group. The burden can be tremendously heavy on youngsters. If the preparation to meet the situation of aging society is not well done, many social problems are inevitable. The working-age population will bear heavier burdens on tax and social security in order to support the aged population. Conflict between different generations will probably get severe. Therefore, higher dependency rate seemed to increase the stress and pressure among working population. In 2007, it took 7 persons among the working-age population to support one aged person. In 2020, it will take 4.5 persons and in 2050, it will take 1.4 persons (JoongAng Daily, 1 July 2009). However, dependency rate can be divided into child and aged dependency rate. Taken these two factors in comparison, there are the differences in term of perception, feeling and outcome.

**Table 7: Child Dependency VS Aged Dependency**

	<b>Child dependency</b>	<b>Aged dependency</b>
<b>Perception</b>	Gift	Burden
<b>Feeling</b>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feed with willingness</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'MUST' responsibility in order to gain social acceptance</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive</li> <li>• Enjoy seeing growth with more energy and talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative</li> <li>• Getting older with less energy and more diseases</li> </ul>

**1.1.1) Child dependency rate:** Even it deals with stress from making more money to afford their children' costly education, many youth and middle-aged viewed their child as the valuable gift and feed them with willingness. That's because people can enjoy seeing the positive outcome from their children' growth with more energy and talent. Furthermore, child dependency rate seem to encourage more work determination among working group. Therefore, child dependency rate have negative relationship with the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

**1.1.2) Aged dependency rate:** Even the cost of feeding both child and elderly are not so different, many feed the elderly as the MUST duty or responsibility, just to gain social acceptances. Unavoidably, aged dependency is viewed as burden since it is not fun seeing the negative outcome of getting older with less energy and more disease. Also, the filial piety seemed to be worsening in modern South Korea. Therefore, aged dependency rate bring more stress and pressure to the working population while child dependency brings less.

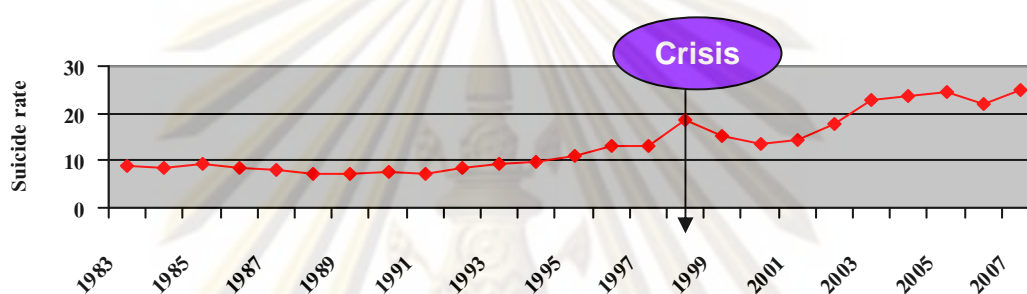
In addition, the emergence of this aging society is reflected the rising demand on social welfare for the elderly including increasing government's responsibility in supporting the elderly. In South Korea, it is the family who takes care of its elderly. Traditionally, women, especially wife of the first son was responsible for caring the elderly. Unfortunately, the demand for women work participation has reduced the role of women in the support on the elderly. More worried is the intense increase in the women's labor force participation in the future as the mean to replace labor shortage that would seriously affect the support system for the elderly. Thus, it is expected that most elderly would face more difficulties in obtaining care services at home. Therefore, it is really a dilemma whether the elderly should be taken care by the family or by the government.



## 1.2. Economic Factor

**1.2.1) GDP per capita:** Since economic crisis caused social instability through poverty and income inequality, most people thus blamed first on economic for creating life difficulties, great shame, and mental health contributing to high suicide rate.

**Figure 4: Suicide Trend in South Korea: 1983-2007**



**Source:** Korean Statistical Information Service  
([http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp))

Foster (1991) described his shock model that the initial shock liked economic recession or the trauma of war affects the whole or partial population during a limited period of time. In addition, these sudden shocks can later deteriorate the survivors, especially among the financially vulnerable members of the community. That is why the remarkable increase in suicide spurred mainly from this short-term economic crisis.

In South Korea, the highest suicide rate is found among those who were unable to catch with the rapid development or adverse events. The crisis hit the poverty to increase substantially. The World Bank reported that the absolute poverty rate in South Korea reached 23% in 1998, compared to 9% in 1997. However, improving the economic climate could not eventually reduce suicide level in South Korea. Moreover, economic development does not seem to determine life satisfaction in general, since industrialized countries such as South Korea and Japan rank lower than developing countries such as Thailand and Vietnam. At the same time, they rank lower than the average of 6.7 for 30 OECD countries ([www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/asia](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/indicators/asia)). Modernization has been shown to be positively associated with high suicide rates. Mental depression, substance abuse, and suicide rates increase as

people achieve higher levels of wealth. Point to Seoul, suicides are quite frequent in the wealthy area liked Gangnam-gu. That means the wealthy of the city also affects the suicide rate as well. Therefore, status is directly related to suicide, i.e. higher status occupation tends to have higher rate of suicide. Also, higher expectations accompanying economic prosperity play a major role here. As we can see that, in the 80s when GDP is very low, South Korean suicide rates were amongst the lowest in the world. Now, suicide rate seem to increase at the same speed as South Korea's economic ranking. This may imply that the physical hardship is somehow endurable, but psychological hardship is hardly unbearable.

Historically, the increase in suicide rates related not only with short term drop in GDP per capita, but also with a long term increase in GDP per capita as well. The gradual economic upturn after the crisis seems to stem the suicide tide. Therefore, GDP play little effect on suicide rate in long-term since there is no sign of downward trend of suicide even economic recovery. GDP per capita just affect the sudden increased in suicide rate due to adverse events liked economic crisis. The real hidden factor was the increased stress and mental-illness induced by the lengthy recession. Ahn Jae Hwan's suicide can be the good example of those who confronted with the accumulated stresses from economic factor. The result of his repeated failures in businesses created the mounting debt. Prolonged struggling financially created serious depression contributing to his suicide.

For as much prosperity that South Korea has gained, what wondering is that are people really much happier than the past. Under the prolonged hypothesis that the higher rate of GDP means the higher degree of well-being and happiness of people in that country may no longer true. Money does not always mean happiness. It was the King of Bhutan, who first suggested that GDP per capita was perhaps not the best way to judge the welfare of a country's citizens; instead Gross National Happiness (GNH) per capita index was introduced. While many claimed that GNH is unrealistic and illusive indicator, Bhutan has proven his successful theory. Not only Nations Encyclopedia named Bhutan as "one of the safest places on earth," Business Week (Adrian White from the University of Leicester, 2007) ranks Bhutan "The happiest country in Asia" as well as "The 8th happiest country in the world, while South Korea ranked 103rd on the list, sandwiched between Madagascar and Bangladesh.

### 1.2.2) Unemployment

Unemployment people were particularly vulnerable to external economic shocks. That is why young and middle-aged men appeared the steep increases in suicide rates from 1997 to 1998 in South Korea. At the first glance, growing unemployment was mainly seen as related to suicide increases in South Korea. But if we look carefully, in 1990, the unemployment fell to 2.4% and remained low until 1997, staying in the 2% range. However, since the request for the IMF bailout loan in November 1997, the unemployment rate has started to rise sharply, reaching the peak at 6.8% in 1998. After that, the employment situation has greatly worsened in the wake of the financial crisis. Economic restructuring stimulate the negative trends in unemployment, poverty and income level. The obvious impact from crisis was the collapse of the middle class, disintegrated family network, poverty distribution, social conflict and family dissolution. Consequently, the immediate aftermath of the crisis was the structural reform. The inevitable outcomes such as reduced income, layoff, and increasing unemployment were widely practiced in South Korea with the hope of a better future.

**Table 8: The reduction of monthly income in different economic group (1997-1998)**

Income Level	Average	Lowest (0-20%)	Lower (21-40%)	Middle (41-60%)	Higher (61-80%)	Highest (81-100%)
Real Income(Won)	2,133,100	784,000	1,368,000	1,872,000	2,440,200	4,244,000
Change (in %)	-6.7	-17.2	-11.8	-9.9	-8.0	-0.3

**Source:** Korean National Statistical Office, various years (<http://www.kosis.kr/eng/index.html>)

From table, as consequence of wage cuts and ongoing layoffs, there was a general decrease in average income. The average monthly income in 1998 decreased 6.7 percent from the previous year. The lowest class suffer a sharply decrease up to 17.2 percent, while the highest class just decreased only 0.3 percent. This indicates that the crisis threatened the job security of low-income workers much more than other income groups. Prior to losing their jobs, a large number of unemployed earn incomes below the average. The crisis caused a further reduction of income evidenced by the skyrocketing from a Gini of 0.298 in 1996 to 0.358 in 2000. That widens the polarization gap, which later could threaten to cause class conflicts.



Such a rise in poverty, along with income inequality caused social instability. The unemployment not only the factor triggering the changing in attitudes, life styles and values of both the unemployed and their families, but also their social and class consciousness. Class consciousness is something abstract, dependent wholly on the subjective feeling. In short, it can also be inferred that the weakest class consciousness may emerge when economic affluence and wealth is evenly distributed. On the contrary, the strongest class consciousness may emerge during a recession or crisis and when wealth is unevenly distributed. A survey by the Hyundai Research Institute (1999) revealed that 44.6% of the South Korean people considered themselves as belonging to the middle class. However, another 19.7% said that they had fallen from the middle to the lower class after the economic crisis giving the reason of the economic recession and restructuring (50.6%), displacement (12.3%), and future instability (9.0%) attributed their downward mobility. Further, 80% of this group predicted that it would take at least three years to be able to return to the middle class. Also, similar research by the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) Research Center (1998) implied that middle class consciousness collapsed rapidly after the economic crisis in South Korea, particularly among the unemployed. The ratios of those who classified themselves in the upper, middle, and lower classes prior to the crisis were 3.0%, 72.9%, and 24.1%, respectively. Following the economic crisis, only 0.8 percent and 27.8 percent placed themselves in the upper and middle classes respectively, while 71.4 per cent responded that they belonged to the lower classes. Thus, almost fifty percent experienced a downward mobility from the middle class to the lower classes.

Bartley et al (1996) stated that regardless of social background, an extended period of unemployment seems to deteriorate mental health, especially among young men. Of course, the impacts on crisis was immediate targeted on two groups in particular – those at the beginning and those at the end of their working lives rather than for those in secured jobs and in the middle of their working lives. The impact is more marked in men than women. Consequently, unemployed young and aged working men were hardest hit by an economic recession. Unemployment rate was significantly related with the suicides of young, middle-aged and elderly males. When the 1997 economic crisis first attacked South Korea, the greatest rise in the suicide rate ratio was found in males aged 35–64 (rate ratio = 1.68). Fortunately, the resurgence in 2002 was most prominent among ages 65–79, while there was not

much increase among those aged 15–34. In 1998, suicides rate increased 68% in males, and 34% in females. According to Brenner (1979), suicide is less sensitive to cumulative economic and social circumstances, thus usually response to recent circumstances with shorter time lags than those with chronic disease. So, unemployment may have played a great role in this sudden rise evidenced by the steep suicide curve within a year of increasing unemployment began. Actually, South Korea had basic foundations of a primary social safety net system in place prior to the crisis. Unfortunately, during the crisis, the safety net system was quite limited. As the unemployment rate rose to unexpected level, the South Korean government was unable to cope with the mass layoff and jobless. Many were not eligible to receive benefits. As of January 1998, only 41 percent of wage earners were eligible for unemployment insurances (Korean Labor Institute). Even the revised unemployment insurance or other elements of a social safety net aimed to subsidize more for unemployed, the suicide situation still not getting better. However, there is a link between socio-cultural and increased suicide rates in South Korea. Under the Confucianism, men are supposed to be the breadwinner. There are many dignities involved as being men in South Korea. Therefore, unemployed is somehow equal to shame among middle aged men. Considering that a working wives are a sign of a man's failure to earn enough to support his family adequately. High female labor force was partly induced by male's unemployment, which could generate young male suicides. Also, female labor force could decrease labor chances of elder males that may lead to elder male' suicides. At the same time, increase in women work participation could decrease women suicides which may be inconsistent with the Stack's theory (1993); the more females work participation, the lower the degree of integration became, and the higher the suicide rate was due to the role conflict. Looking from the case studies on high profile suicides, the factor dealt with the decline of work rather than really unemployed. Jeong Da-Bin, Choi Jin-Sil, Kim Ji-Hoo, and Kin Seok-Kyun are the case studies of those who suffer from the decline and/or shortage of work from the external forces liked intense competition and/or inability to conform to the social norm such as being gay or divorced.

Regarding our research question, "As people always blame the external factor, especially the economic crisis as the first causes of this abnormally high suicide rate", so, if South Korea gradually pulls out of its economic difficulties, the suicide rate supposed to obviously drop. But South Korea was not fall in this assumption.

Also, celebrities and a number of students and housewives committed suicide. Neither group could represent as the unemployment statistics. So, it can conclude that changes in unemployment rates might contribute to the sudden and short-term rise in the suicide rate, but not long-term effect. Nor do unemployment and the threat of poverty seem to be the factors affecting the long-term rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

### 1.3. Social Factor

**1.3.1) Marriage:** Marriage is the pattern of life in South Korea. That's why we can see many young South Korean have a hundred times of blind date. Many women are worried when she can't marry within her 30s. Since marriage is considered more 'compulsory' than 'optional', so, it could assume that South Korea was one of the country possess the high marriage rate compared to other developed countries. According to Durheim, marriage is an institution that favors men and disadvantages women. Moreover, South Korea still maintains the strict traditional roles of women as inferior and submissive beings. So, marriage may call as the protection for men. However, for women, marriage itself may not a preservative factor against suicide but that children and the family are the preservative. Unlike the west, marriage seems to increase the possibility of suicide; especially for women who apparently suffer from the demands and restraints of the strong patriarchy structure liked South Korea. Therefore, marriage can be the buffer for male' suicides, but fails to provide a buffer against suicide for the female.

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



### 1.3.2) Divorce

**Table 9: Changes in divorce situation**

Traditional South Korea	Economic Crisis (1997-1998)	Modern South Korea
- High extended family integration - Cultural conformism - Low couple centeredness - Courage required	- Unharmonious family - Quarrel arises from economic problem ex: job insecurity - Intense stress	- Individualism  - Satisfaction based
- Stigma involved	- Suicide & violence cases in households increased	- Value change/ break taboo

In the past, the contextual features of South Korea society; high extended family integration, cultural conformism, and low couple centeredness may offset the negative consequences of divorce, marked by a low divorce rate around 0.7-1.5 % range. In 1998, worsening economic condition was a cause of unharmonious family. As the chain effect, the situation spilled over into homes. Many couples quarrel arises from economic problems dealing with job insecurity. Park Yong-Hyun, a professor at Seoul National University and the author of a thesis on the impact of layoff on marriage said “Chances are high that couples separate or take a break one or two years after the male spouse lose his job. While women’ layoff do not lead to a significant impact on divorce because they are not traditionally considered the primary breadwinner. However, if the couples can pass this terrible time, their relationship will grow stronger.” As the result, the divorce rate sparked up to 2.5 and keeps on increasing reaching the peak at 3.4 in 2003. And that showed the bad sign on the South Korean family condition. According to OECD, the divorce level in South Korea is the third highest in the world after America and the UK. South Korea’s divorce rate nearly 5 times increased between 1983 and 2003 (from 0.7 to 3.4). The unharmonious husband-wife relations in this society were influenced by the Confucianism doctrine that gives the priority to men and made women become subordinate. Culturally, the South Korean father rarely showed his love to the family. They were not used to express their love to their children and wives periodically. In addition, South Korean family had limited time of the togetherness. Generally, the South Korean family really focused on their children’s education. On one hand, children have to study hard for academically success. On the other hand, father has to work hard to support their children’s costly education and well-being of family as well. In mid of 2004, South Korea again suffered the unstable economic condition.

This caused the obvious rise of unemployment rate and the number of families that were involved in bad credit. The strong economic pressure caused the intense stress so that the suicide and violence cases in the households increased. According to South Korean police statistics, the number of people who are arrested because of the household violence increased from 15,557 peoples in 2001, 16,324 peoples in 2002, and to 17,770 peoples during 2003.

There are various reasons of this high divorce rate, but the main reason is disagreements between the mother-in-law and wife. A representative from South Korea's family courts who handles divorce said "Divorce cases always increase after Mid-autumn Day, New Year and the summer holiday because couples are more likely to quarrel about going to the in-laws house. And then once they get there, as problems between the mother-in-law and wife become from pronounced, someone ends up demanding a divorce." Of course, women are always blamed for rising divorces rate. However, high divorce rate does not necessary mean the breakdown of social (may be divorce for the sake of business), nor does 'low' divorce rate indicate a social stability. Keeping low divorce rate does not mean South Korea will have a better society because in reality, there are many South Korean women avoid divorce just to sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children' by upholding the 'virtue to endure' even the violence and adultery of their husband. Though South Korean law allowed women divorcing their husbands since the 1920, the stigma on divorced women continues to be great. It takes tremendous courage and determination to file for divorce in South Korean society.

Another factor that has led to rising divorce rates is a change in values. Recently, a woman put divorce lawsuit, the very rare matter happened in South Korea. More women are initiating divorce or separation procedures. 66.7% of divorces in 2003 were initiated by women, compared to 30.6% by men (Korean Times, May 18, 2004). With the growing modernization, South Korea is fast becoming an open, westernized society. The rapid changing attitudes toward divorce as well as marriage show a sign of social transformation. In contemporary South Korea, many women break the taboo, and focusing more on individual satisfaction. Even those divorces women find themselves in an unenviable disadvantaged position, both socially and financially, many still choose divorce as an exit. But for those South Korea women who choose not to incur the disadvantages of the divorce or who feel unable to leave a painful

situation may see suicide as the only exit. Shocking is that most of suicides from divorce are men since women initiate the majority of divorce proceedings. So generally, man is shocked with the news that he's going to be divorced, and also lose face and dignity as the breadwinner for failing to control even the easiest matter; that is his submissive subordinate likes his wife. Added with the nature of hiding their pain, so men have more suicide prone than women. Furthermore, South Korean cultures place great emphasis on marriage and patriarchal kinship system. The single and divorced persons must experience conflict arising from their inability to conform to the normative expectation of the society. The high suicide rate among them simply reflects their isolation from their normative system. At least, this is a part of a social cause affecting the observed high suicide rate. Choi Jin-sil can be best described the unorthodox status of divorced women in South Korea. Sadly, her career failed just because of her divorce did not match with the social norm. Therefore, divorce men could have psychologically suffer dealing with face and dignity, while divorced women could have an economically and socially suffer from taboo that may lead to suicide decision.

## **2. Findings and discussion**

From the above factors analysis, this study provided the further analysis to prove the relationship of the main external variables affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea through multiple linear regression method, using 26 years data ranging from 1983-2008. The research investigated 6 predictors; that are child dependency rate, aged dependency, GDP per capita, unemployment rate, crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate as the independent variables (X-value) in order to predict the dependency rate; that is suicide rate (Y-value).

The statistic findings revealed the best 2 regression models with high accuracy; that is the model with 4 predictors and the model that cover all 6 predictors. Therefore, the research will provide here the comparison of regression analysis these 2 models in order to find out the best fit model.



Table 10: The comparison of regression analysis: 4 predictors VS 6 predictors

Predictor	4 Predictors				6 predictors			
	Coof	SE Coef	T	P	Coof	SE Coef	T	P
Constant	-53.99	15.39	-3.51	0.002	-48.59	15.66	-3.10	0.006
Child Dependency	0.4043	0.1058	3.82	0.001	0.4196	0.1521	2.76	0.012
Aged Dependency	3.2064	0.3850	8.33	0.000	2.59	0.8381	3.09	0.006
Marriage	1.958	1.037	1.89	0.073	1.504	1.117	1.35	0.194
Divorce	4.602	1.479	3.11	0.005	3.826	1.614	2.37	0.028
GDP					0.000295	0.000359	0.82	0.422
Unemployment					0.6172	0.3973	1.55	0.137
S	1.53479				1.51986			
R-Sq	95.3%				95.8%			
R-Sq (adj)	94.4%				94.5%			

### Analysis of variance

Source	4 predictors					6 predictors				
	DF	SS	MS	F	P	DF	SS	MS	F	P
Regression	4	995.91	248.98	105.70	0.000	6	1001.5	166.91	72.26	0.000
Residual Error	21	49.47	2.36			19	43.89	2.31		
Total	25	1045.4				25	1045.4			

From the above regression analysis with 6 predictors, the coefficient on GDP per capita of 0.000295 did not showed much influential power with the rise of suicide rate in South Korea. Same explanation applied to unemployment rate. Moreover, the P-value showed that GDP per capita, unemployment, and crude marriage rate are clearly not statistically significant. However, even the P-value of crude marriage rate is quite far from the alpha level in the model with 6 predictors, but, the P-value of crude marriage rate turn to convey some meaning with the rise of suicide rate in South Korea when it was included in the model with 4 predictors evidenced by the coefficient value of 1.958. Also, as the number of predictors has changed to four, P-value has reduced to 0.073. After compared to the alpha level of 0.05, crude marriage rate was somehow acceptable to include in the equation since the model with 4 predictors showed the high accuracy up to 95.3% represented by R-Sq value with the standard error at 1.5348. Therefore, only economic factor represented by GDP per capita and unemployment rate are excluded from the equation as it did not show enough explanatory power. Here is the best regression equation;

$$\text{Suicide rate} = - 54.0 + 0.404 \text{ Child dependency rate} + 3.21 \text{ Aged dependency rate} + 1.96 \text{ Marriage rate} + 4.60 \text{ Divorce rate}$$

Supported with the P-value in table of variance analysis, with alpha-level of 0.05, if P-Value  $\leq$  alpha-level, we can conclude that the correlation is significantly different from zero. That means this equation was applicable with high creditability in predicting the future suicide trend in South Korea.

In addition, the equation showed that aged dependency rate have high correlation of 3.21 increase on suicide rate in South Korea, while the child dependency rate play less role with just 0.404 increase in suicide rate. The coefficient of marriage rate conveyed some meaning since it breaks the prolonged understanding that considered marriage as the buffer against suicide. Unfortunately, marriage was not influential enough in patriarchy structure liked Korea since it also revealed 1.958 increased in suicide rate. The divorce rate play the crucial role affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea with the highest coefficient of 4.6 increased in suicide rate. These statistics findings all match with the factor analysis mention earlier. In summary, the regression model revealed the 4 predictors that consistent with the research's setting hypothesis; that is:

- Child dependency rate affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.
- Aged dependency rate affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.
- Crude marriage rate dependency rate affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.
- Crude divorce rate dependency rate affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

The hypothesis on economic factor was rejected as unemployment and GDP per capita are clearly not statistically significant and did not show enough explanatory power. That means economic factor does not always lead to the rise of suicide rate in South Korea which is also coincided with the earlier factor analysis. Next, the study will further provide the micro view through the case studies on high profile suicides.

**Table 11: Summary of factors affecting high-profile suicides**

No.	Name	Demo	Social	Economic			Technology	Culture			Internal		
		Aged Dep	Divorce	GDP	Unemployed/ Work decline	Financial problem	Internet harassment	Ashamed & Dignity	Norm conflict	work pressure/ High expectation	Depression	Carreer failed	Love
1	Lee Eun-Joo							x	x		x		
2	U;nee						x			x	x		
3	Jeong Da-bin	x			x	x					x	x	
4	Ahn Jae-hwan			x		x					x		
5	Choi Jin Sil		x		x		x		x		x		
6	Jang Chae-won								x		x		x
7	Kim Ji-Hoo				x	x	x		x		x		
8	Kim Seok-kyun				x	x					x	x	
9	Jang Ja-Yeon							x		x	x		
10	Woo Seung-yeon										x	x	x
11	Ex-president Roh						x	x			x		
12	Daul Kim									x	x		

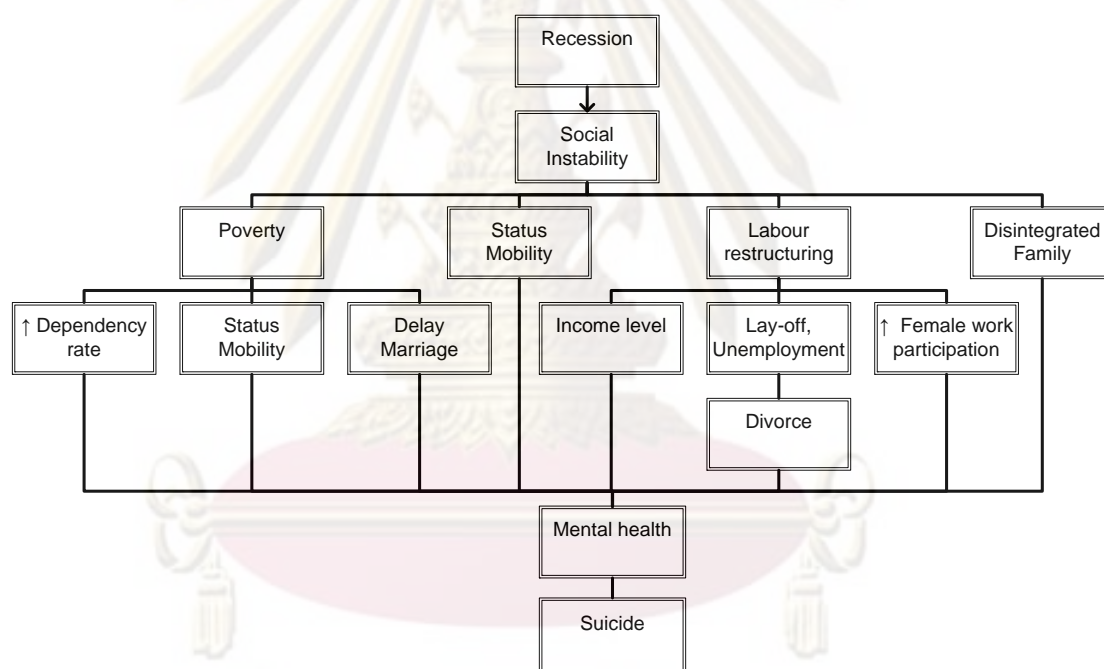
Apart from the stress and pressure to earn money to support their own family in the high competitive society liked South Korea, socio-economic play a major role here. Ahn faced with the accumulated stresses from economic factor. The result of his repeated failures in businesses created the mounting debt. Prolonged struggling financially created serious depression contributing to his suicide. Jeong Da-Bin, Choi Jin-Sil, Kim Ji-Hoo, and Kin Seok-Kyun are the case studies of those who suffer from the decline and/or shortage of work from the external forces liked intense competition and/or inability to conform to the social norm such as being gay or divorced. In addition, Choi can be best described the unorthodox status of divorced women in South Korea. Sadly, her career failed just because of her divorce did not match with the social norm. Noticeably, all external forces drive to the accumulated mental illness, commonly known as depression. However, in many high profile cases, external factors seemed to play minor role for suicides. There are still many different factors affecting suicides vary on each individual. Many of high profile' suicides caused from internal factor rather than external factor which may be conflicted with the macro overview. From the above table, we can see that external forces did not affect much life difficulties on a sizeable of high profile suicides (Lee Eun-Joo, U;nee, Jang Chae Won, Jang Ja-Yeon, Woo Seung-Yeon, Ex-president Roh and Daul Kim) since they all have everything; wealth, fame, splendid look, etc. Sadly, most high profile' suicides came from the internal factors which can be treatable. Unfortunately, there is stigma against mental health in South Korea. Therefore, the external factors affect the physical hardship that can stimulate the rise of sudden suicide rate, while the culture and internal factors seem to affected psychological hardship dealing with



cumulative stresses that later could cause more suicide-prone. Mental health has been the leading force behind the sharp rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

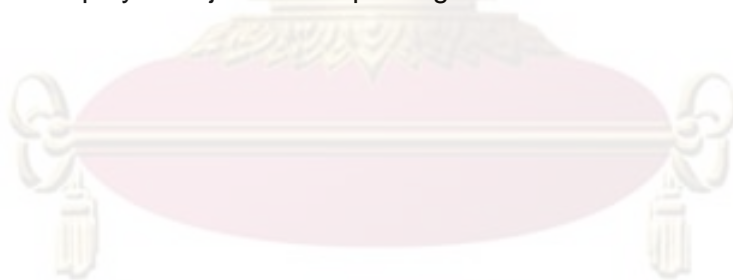
However, external factors are still the crucial source originated depression. As external factors have a severe impact affecting social changes and mental illness contributing to higher suicide rate, the study will next discuss the various chain effects caused from external factor. Recession will be picked up as the representative for explaining the power of external forces as below;

**Figure 5: A model of external impact on suicide**



The above figure showed the chain effect from changing in GDP in form of recession. The economic crisis have spurred question wondering whether these economic changes will lead to increased suicides. As Brenner (1979) re-defined impact of economic cycles on health that; Economic instability increased the possibilities of unstable life habits including break the basic social networks that finally became the main causes of daily stresses. In other words, the lack of financial and employment security led to higher suicide rates. The result from economic downturn led to various chain effects through stress, financial, social, health and mental health—all in negative outcomes. A chain of adversity may start from losing job, quarrel from job

insecurity, get depressed from financial strain, loss of personal control, and finally end up suicide. The most common mental health is depression, which significantly increased suicide risk. However, losses (whether real or anticipated) normally resulted in humiliation, shame, or despair. Thus, these chain effect caused by economic factor can be the potential link for higher rate of depression which later leads those vulnerable individuals to committed suicide. Another is; even the economic factor (GDP per capita and unemployment) was excluded from the regression model and did not show enough explanatory power on the rise of suicide rate; still, the surge of ungreying suicides following the 1997 economic crisis suggested that South Korean is particularly vulnerable to the flow-on from an economic downturn. The sharp economic downturn still expects to increase suicide risk, especially among working-age population and elderly whose retirement security is threatened. While there is no major single explanation for the rise of suicide rate in South Korea, outcomes are influenced by a number of external forces since external trends strongly affect the internal dynamics, which can, in turn, affect the mental health and future wellbeing. Therefore, external factors, especially the “forced into” condition by social or economic pressure are the excellent accelerators for creating the concurrent difficulties in both physical hardship and mental illness. In conclusion, external factors play a major role in sparking the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

#### 1. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate factors affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea. The research problem was concerned on the serious trend of labor shortage in the near future. Moreover, the rapid aging society will increase the dependency rate on youngster. So, it is very important to control and reducing suicide rate in South Korea. As most people always blamed external factors such as demographic changes, social factor, and especially economic crisis as the first cause of suicide, so this study aim to prove whether external factor really affect the rise of suicide rate in South Korea. Of course, the result will be beneficial for the South Korea to solve in the right direction, and hopefully, could lead to the implementation South Korea as the better healthy place for living.

Many suicide theories and literature reviews is used to guide setting the conceptual framework including determine the crucial variables. Since the cultural factor is quite limited in term of historical measurable data, therefore, here, only demographic, economic and social factors were used to measure the relationship of suicide rate. The study picked the main representative variables of each factor to test the hypothesis as follow;

- **Demographic Factor:** (Child Dependency Rate and Aged Dependency Rate)
- **Economic Factor:** (Unemployment rate and GDP per capita)
- **Social Factor:** (Crude marriage rate and crude divorce rate)

These independent variables are the key to understanding changes in the health and well-being of the South Korean that could lead to suicide decision. Both documentary research and quantitative research were applied. A dozen of South Korea' high profile suicides reported through media during 2000-2009 was picked up as the case studies in order to understand more on the varying factors affecting suicide decision on each individual. Also, multiple linear regression method was applied to test the relationship of suicide rate and each represented variables. Due to the limitation of



suicide data, most of the statistics provide only crude death rate. Therefore, the maximum collected data here will be on 26 years basis, ranging from 1983-2008. Completed suicide data including the main represented factors were collected through WHO, UN Demographic Yearbook, UN statistical yearbook, UN database, OECD, KOSIS and KNSO.

Risk factors for suicide seem to differ by age and gender. While the high suicide rate among men may related to social disintegration, such as unemployment, divorce, alcohol and drug abuse, and decline in marriage, the women side may related to Confucianism value, income inequality. Meanwhile, the increase of aging suicides was attributed to health and financial-related factor. Also, age differences are notable in suicide patterns in South Korea. Police suggest that teenager mainly kill themselves over education problems, middle aged due to economic woes, and seniors because of health problems. Historically, the elderly over 55 continuously showed the highest suicide rate. However, the younger showed a higher proportional suicide rate compared to older. The WHO statistics also marked a steep increase in the number of people in their 20s and 30s taking their own lives, while suicide is in the low rank for aging groups. The high growth of the ungreying suicide is a relatively new phenomenon in South Korea. In short, the increasing suicide rate in South Korea was composed of a greater number of the older group and a greater proportional increase in the younger group. Fortunately, the suicide rate is very rare among children.

Statistic findings revealed the best regression model with 4 predictors; that is child dependency rate, aged dependency rate, crude marriage rate, and crude divorce rate. Economic factor represented by GDP per capita and unemployment rate are excluded from the equation as it did not show enough explanatory power. However, external factors still play a major role in sparking the rise of suicide rate in South Korea because of its severe impact affecting social changes and mental illness contributing to higher suicide rate.

**Child and Aged Dependency Rate:** Child dependency is viewed as the valuable gift, while aged dependency is viewed as burden. That's because people can enjoy seeing the positive outcome from their children' growth with more energy and talent. In contrast, it's not fun seeing the negative outcome of getting older with less energy and more disease. Also, the filial piety seemed to be worsening in

modern South Korea. In short, aged dependency rate bring more stress and pressure to the working population, while child dependency brings less. In turn, child dependency rate seem to encourage more work determination among working group.

**GDP per capita:** In South Korea, the highest suicide rate is found among those who were unable to catch with the rapid development or adverse events. Also, higher expectations accompanying economic prosperity play a major role here. Most blamed first on economic for creating life difficulties and great shame contributing to high suicide rate. The remarkable increase in suicide spurred mainly from this short-term economic downturn. Historically, the increase in suicide rates related not only with short term drop in GDP per capita, but also with a long term increase in GDP per capita as well. The gradual economic upturn after the crisis seems to stem the suicide tide. Therefore, GDP play little effect on suicide rate since there is no sign of downward trend of suicide even economic recovery. GDP per capita just affect the sudden increased in suicide rate due to adverse events liked economic crisis. The real hidden factor was the increased stress and mental-illness induced by the lengthy recession.

**Unemployment:** In South Korea, young and middle-aged men appeared the steep increases in suicide rates from 1997 to 1998. At the first glance, growing unemployment was mainly seen as related to suicide increases in South Korea. But if we look carefully, after South Korea gradually pulls out of its economic difficulties, the suicide rate supposed to obviously drop. Unfortunately, South Korea was not fall in this assumption. Also, a dozen of celebrities and a number of students, housewives, and elderly people committed suicide. Neither group could represent as the unemployment statistics. Instead, there is a link between socio-cultural and increased suicide rates in South Korea. So, it can conclude that changes in unemployment rates might contribute to the sudden and short-term rise in the suicide rate, but not long-term effect. The unemployment not only the factor triggering the changing in attitudes, life styles and values of both the unemployed and their families, but also their social and class consciousness. During economic crisis, almost fifty percent experienced a downward mobility from the middle class to the lower classes. In short, nor do unemployment and the threat of poverty seem to be the factors affecting the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

**Marriage:** Marriage is the pattern of life in South Korea. So, we can see many young South Korean have a hundred times of blind date. Many women are worried when she can't marry within her 30s. Since marriage is considered more 'compulsory' than 'optional', so, it could assume that South Korea was one of the country posses the high marriage rate compared to other developed countries. Unlike the west, marriage seems to increase the possibility of suicide; especially for women who apparently suffer from the demands and restraints of the strong patriarchy structure liked South Korea. Therefore, marriage can be the buffer for male' suicides, but fails to provide a buffer against suicide for the female.

**Divorce:** In the past, the contextual features of South Korea society; high extended family integration, cultural conformism, and low couple centeredness may offset the negative consequences of divorce. In 1998, worsening economic condition was a cause of unharmonious family. As the chain effect, the situation spilled over into homes. Many couples quarrel arises from economic problems dealing with job insecurity. However, it takes tremendous courage and determination to file for divorce in South Korean society since there was a stigma involved. Another factor that has led to rising divorce rates is a change in values. In contemporary South Korea, many women break the taboo, and focusing more on individual satisfaction. Recently, a woman put divorce lawsuit, the very rare matter happened in South Korea. Added with the nature of hiding their pain, men have more suicide prone than women in case of divorce. Furthermore, the single and divorced persons must experience conflict arising from their inability to conform to the normative expectation of the society. The high suicide rate among them simply reflects their isolation from their normative system. At least, this is a part of a social cause affecting the observed high suicide rate. Therefore, divorce men could have psychologically suffer dealing with face and dignity, while divorced women could have an economically and socially suffer from taboo that may lead to suicide decision.

In Korea, there have been numerous celebrities who have decided to take their own lives. From the case studies, most celebs' suicides are females; the young and middle-aged are most at risk. However, in many cases, external factors seemed to play minor role for suicides. There are still many different factors affecting suicides vary on each individual. In case of high profile' suicides, many suicides caused from internal factor rather than external factor which may be inconsistent with the macro



overview. External forces did not affect much life difficulties on a sizeable of high profile suicides since they all have everything; wealth, fame, splendid look, etc. Sadly, most high profile' suicides came from the internal factors which can be treatable. Unfortunately, there is stigma against mental health in South Korea. Therefore, external factors are the excellent accelerators for creating the concurrent difficulties in both physical hardship and mental illness. In conclusion, external factors play a major role in sparking the rise of suicide rate in South Korea.

We have seen a lot of social changes over the last 40 years and South Korean are having a hard time keeping up with capitalist values. The modernization can totally change the external look of South Korea, but internally, South Korea keep on dragging its traditional values of Confucianism from the pre-modern era. Something about modern life kill more and more people by suicide. Additionally, both traditional and economic forces have blended with new emerging trends such as the increasing isolation of individuals within society and the breakdown of the family. All the above elements have been further compounded by inadequate suicide prevention measures and a lack of effective government policy caused the increasing trend of suicide in South Korea.

Our lives are affected by the decision we make. Most of the time, it is the smallest things that make the biggest impact. Finally, suicide involves with the feeling of loneliness, helplessness and hopelessness. The need to be loved, cared for and understood is universal. Suicide is individual decision and only that individual can reverse the decision. However, all of us, no matter as a family, friend or surrounding people can help preventing suicide. Suicide prevention is everyone's responsibility.

## **2. Implication**

Although medical progress and easier access to health services have helped to decrease the dying from all diseases, which belong to the majority causes of death in South Korea. In turn, the current external suicide prevention program seems no avail. Installing automated doors on platforms in subway could prevent people from jumping on the track, both intentional and accidental form, but it was narrow prevention coverage. Increasing the number of health care facilities and consulting centers may waste the country's budget if the stigma concerning health illness still exists. Law to limit people' thinking and speeches in cyberspace sound impossible.

Instead, loosen seniority system is recommended since the vicious comments are caused by the oppression of seniority system. Censoring harmful websites and discourage free speech may not be the long-lasting solutions if South Korean mind still sensitive to the various comments. Remember, gossip is very common for human lives. Difficulties in accessibility could help reducing suicides since those with impulsive or hesitate may change their mind. However, the mentioned current external prevention may be worthless if we cannot delete their suicide ideation.

Something about modern life is killing more and more South Koreans by suicide. Actually, suicide prevention may not need much money to solve. Simply starting, just relax. "Que Sera Sera.", making South Koreans feel connected to their community, promoted the strong family and provide support system in place, stimulate self-worth, and just learn to run decent life and sufficient economic. Also, empowering young people to design their life naturally including encourage more participation on hobbies and sports among South Korean could help. Moreover, in IT era, the preventive presentation is recommended in avoiding copycat. Another is the majority of South Korean still sticks to the view that a woman's place is limit at home. As the fertility rate of 1.08, it is useless to keep the high educated women at home feeding a child (<http://www.bloomberg.com>). From OECD finding, across OECD countries with high female employment rates also have the high fertility rates. Therefore, increasing number of female work participation may indirectly help South Korea to increase the number of population, including relieving the women' stress from being subordinate as well. The policy options in relation to low fertility and population aging should center on the welfare for the elderly. Finally, the stigma attached to mental illness should be changed. Depression is treatable and curing from inside is much more worthwhile. However, it seems that an effective reduction in the suicide rate will only be achieved with a large shift in societal values. South Korean society should seek some balance between pursuing a better life "financially" and pursuing a better life "holistically." Importantly, suicide should not be seen as an individual's problem, but society should help these people.

Most of suicides can be prevented if a better environment is created. What the government needs to do is to dig out the buried thoughts and value of South Koreans. As South Korea modernizes, there is a crash between the life they want to live and the life they are being told they have to live. Therefore, the government's job

is to promote that change in thinking. Actually, South Korea is very specialized in promoting, building the beautiful image as we all have seen in South Korean drama. So, why doesn't South Korean use this potential to benefit, and create the friendlier and healthier society in South Korea?



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



## References

- An, C.B. & Jeon, S.H. (2006). Demographic changes and economic growth in Korea. APEA [Online]. Available from: [www.apeaweb.org/confer/sea06/papers/an-jeon.pdf](http://www.apeaweb.org/confer/sea06/papers/an-jeon.pdf)
- Bartley, M., Montgomer, S., Cook, D., et al. (1996). Health and work insecurity in young men. Cited in: Blane, D. Brunner, E., Wilkinson, R. (1997). Health and Social Organization: Towards a health policy for the 21st century. London: Routledge.
- Blakely, T., Collings S.C.D., Atkinson, J. (2003). Unemployment and suicide: evidence for a causal association? Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 57: 594–600.
- Brainerd, E. (2001). Economic reform and mortality in the former Soviet Union: A study of the suicide epidemic in the 1990s. European Economic Review [Online]. Available from: <http://ideas.repec.org/p/iza/izadps/dp243.html> [2009, October]
- Breault, K.D. & Kposowa, A.J. (1995). White Male Suicide in the United States: A Multivariate Individual-Level Analysis: Social Integration and Marital Status: A Multivariate Individual-Level Study of 30,157 Suicides. Social Forces [online]. Available from: <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=96465264> [2009, October]
- Brenner M.H. (1979). Mortality and the national economy: a review, and the experience of England and Wales, 1936–76. Lancet 2 (8142): 568–73.
- Census Bureau of the U.S. Department of Commerce database. Available from: <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/world.html> [2009, October]
- Chandler, R.C., & Tsai, M.Y. (1993). Suicide in Japan and in the West. International Journal of Comparative Sociology 34 (3-4): 244-259.
- Cheng, B.S. (1999). Cointegration and causality between fertility and female labor participation in Taiwan: A multivariate approach. Atlantic Economic Journal [Online]. Available from: <http://www.entrepreneur.com /tradejournals/article /58186140.html> [2009, October]
- Chuang, L.H. & Huang, W.C. (1997). Economic and social correlates of regional suicide rates: A pooled cross-section and time-series analysis. Journal of Socio-Economics 26: 277-89.

- Clarke, R.V. & Lester, D. (1989). Suicide: Closing the exits. New York: Springer-Verlag Inc.
- De Leo, D. (2002). Why are we not getting any closer to preventing suicide?. British Journal of Psychiatry 181: 372-374.
- Duncan, G.J., et al. (1993). Poverty dynamics in eight countries. Journal of Population Economics [Online]. Available from: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/v556694j8rp81615/> [2009, October]
- Durkheim, E. (1897). Le Suicide. France: The Free Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1979). Suicide, a study in Sociology. New York: The Free Press.
- Foster A.D. (1991). Are cohort mortality rates autocorrelated? Demography 28: 619–37.
- Gibbons, R. D., et al. (2007). Early Evidence on the Effects of Regulators' Suicidality Warnings on SSRI Prescriptions and Suicide in Children and Adolescents. The American journal of psychiatry [online]. Available from: <http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/164/9/1356?submit.y=14&submit.x=180&submit=sendit&gca=164%2F9%2F1356&> [2009, October]
- Gove, W.R. & Hughes, M. (1981). Living Alone, Social Integration, and Mental Health. American Journal of Sociology [Online]. Available from: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/2778539>
- Gunnell, D., Middleton, N., Whitley, E., Dorling, D. and Frankel, S. (2003). Why are suicide rates rising in young men but falling in the elderly?—a time-series analysis of trends in England and Wales 1950–1998. Social Science & Medicine [online]. Available from: [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=ArticleURL&\\_udi=B6VBF480CHKW5&\\_user=10&\\_coverDate=08%2F31%2F2003&\\_rdoc=1&\\_fmt=high&\\_orig=search&\\_sort=d&\\_docanchor=&view=c&\\_searchStrId=1289221721&\\_rerunOrigin=scholar.google&\\_acct=C000050221&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_userid=10&md5=79db307073486354d11515ddd a46fd42](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6VBF480CHKW5&_user=10&_coverDate=08%2F31%2F2003&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1289221721&_rerunOrigin=scholar.google&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=79db307073486354d11515ddd a46fd42) [2009, October]
- Hamermesh, D.S. & Soss, N.M. (1974). An Economic Theory of Suicide. Journal of Political Economy 82(1): 83-98.
- Headley, L.A. (1983). Suicide in Asia and the near East. London: University of California Press.
- Huang, W.C. (1996). Religion, culture, economic and sociological correlates of suicide rates: a cross-national analysis, Applied Economics Letters 3: 779-82.

- Iga, M. (1981). Suicide of Japanese Youth. Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior 11(1): 17-30.
- Iga, M., Yamamoto, J., Noguchi, T., & Koshinaga, J. (1978). Suicide in Japan. Social Science and Medicine 12A: 507-516.
- Jungeilges, J. & Kirchgässner, G. (2002). Economic welfare, civil liberty, and suicide: An empirical investigation. Journal of Socio-Economics [Online]. Available from: <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/10175/> [2009, October]
- Kaulapi World. (2010). Anomic Suicide and Japan [online]. Available from: <http://webomatica.com/kaulapi/random/two/soc-421/anomic-suicide-and-japan> [2009, October]
- KNSO database. Available from: <http://kostat.go.kr>[2009, October]
- KOSIS database. Available from: [http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp) [2009, October]
- Kposowa, A.J. (2000). Marital status and suicide in the National Longitudinal Mortality Study. J Epidemiol Community Health [Online]. Available from: <http://jech.bmj.com/content/54/4/254.abstract> [2009, October]
- Lavoie, A. (2008). Suicide risk factors consistent across nations. Eurekalert [Online]. Available from: [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/200801/husrf012908.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/200801/husrf012908.php) [2009, October]
- Leff, N.H. (1969). Dependnecy rate and savings rates. American Economic Review 59: 886-96.
- Lester, D. & Yang, B. (1992). The Economy and Suicide: A Time-Series Study of the U.S.A. American Journal of Economics and Sociology [online]. Available from <http://www.jstor.org/pss/3487659> [2009, October]
- Lo, P.C. edited by Fan R. (1999). Confucian Bioethics. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Manifesto, Fathers' & Christian Party. (2005). World divorce rate [Online]. Available from:[http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Family/Marriage/divorce\\_rates.htm](http://www.jesus-is-savior.com/Family/Marriage/divorce_rates.htm) [2009, October]
- Merton, Robert K. (1938). Social Structure and Anomie. American Sociological Review 3 (5): 672-682. Cited in Orcutt, J. D. (2002). The Anomie Tradition Explaining Rates of Deviant Behavior. Analyzing Deviance [Online]. Available from: [http://deviance.socprobs.net/Unit\\_3/Theory/Anomie.htm](http://deviance.socprobs.net/Unit_3/Theory/Anomie.htm) [2009, October]
- Ministry of public health database. Department of mental health. Available from: <http://www.dmh.go.th/plan/suicide/sui41.asp> [2009, October]



- Nathalie, N., & Gwenole, L. (2005). Interpersonal Dependency in Suicide Attempters. International journal of descriptive and experimental psychopathology 38(3): 140-143.
- Nation Master database. Available from: <http://www.nationmaster.com/index.php> [2009, October]
- Neumayer, E. (2003). Socioeconomic factors and suicide rates at large-unit aggregate levels : a comment. Urban studies 40 (13): 2769-2776
- Nuns, N. & Loas, G. (2005). Interpersonal Dependency in Suicide Attempters. Psychopathology [Online]. Available from: <http://content.karger.com/ProdukteDB/produkte.asp?Doi=85846> [2009, October]
- OECD database. Available from: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx> [2009, October]
- OECD, Korea Policy Centre. (2009). Society at a Glance–Asia/Pacific Edition [Online]. Available from: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/27/13/43465580.pdf> [2009, October]
- Parsons, A. (1969). Belief, Magic, and Anomie Essays in Psychosocial Anthropology. London: Collier-MacMillan Limited.
- Peter, B. (2009, June 01). Letter from South Korea: Learning from the suicide of president Roh Moo-Hyun. Korea Herald [Online]. Available from: <http://www.britannica.com/blogs/2009/06/letter-from-south-korea-learning-from-the-suicide-of-president-roh-moo-hyun/> [2009, October]
- Pilar, M.M. (2004). Gender differences in stress and coping styles. Personality and individual differences [Online]. Available from: [http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?\\_ob=ArticleURL&\\_udi=B6V9F4BWMPGD1&\\_user=10&\\_coverDate=11%2F30%2F2004&\\_rdoc=1&\\_fmt=high&\\_orig=search&\\_sort=d&\\_docanchor=&view=c&\\_searchStrId=1293338521&\\_rerunOrigin=google&\\_acct=C000050221&\\_version=1&\\_urlVersion=0&\\_userid=10&md5=1e29c781d7dbf38e04d23e1e210bdec5](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science?_ob=ArticleURL&_udi=B6V9F4BWMPGD1&_user=10&_coverDate=11%2F30%2F2004&_rdoc=1&_fmt=high&_orig=search&_sort=d&_docanchor=&view=c&_searchStrId=1293338521&_rerunOrigin=google&_acct=C000050221&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=10&md5=1e29c781d7dbf38e04d23e1e210bdec5) [ 2009, October]
- Pilgrim, D. (2005). Key concept in mental health. London: Sage.
- Reiss, N.S. & Dombeck, M. (2007). Suicide Statistics. Mental Help [Online]. Available from: [http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view\\_doc.php?type=doc&id=13737](http://www.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=doc&id=13737) [2009, October]
- Riaz, H. (1983). A way of dying, suicide in Singapore. Malaysia: Koon Wah.
- Robins, E., et al. (1959). Some clinical considerations in the prevention of suicide based on a study of successful suicides. American Journal of Public Health 49: 888-899.

- Rodríguez, A.A. (2005). Income inequality, unemployment, and suicide: a panel dataanalysis of 15 European countries. Applied Economics [online]. Available from:<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a713721542&db=a> I [October, 2009]
- Samaritans. (2009). Divorce and suicide. Available from [http://www.samaritans.org/media\\_centre/emotional\\_health\\_news/marital-breakdown-factor.aspx](http://www.samaritans.org/media_centre/emotional_health_news/marital-breakdown-factor.aspx) [2009, October]
- Schulz Matt (2008). Credit cards around the world: South Korea. Available from: <http://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/credit-cards-around-the-world-south-korea-1276.php> [October, 2009]
- Stack, S. (1998).The relationship of female labor force participation to suicide: A comparative analysis. Archives of Suicide Research [online]. Available from: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/bg6gwdukht8le4r2/> [2009, October]
- Thom, B.G. (1983). The Human Nature of Social Discontent Alienation, Anomie, Ambivalence. New Jersey: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Tirakanun, S. (2003). Statistics in Sociological Research. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Traphagan, J.W. (2004). Interpretations of elder suicide, stress, and dependency among rural Japanese. Ethnology [Online]. Available from: [www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-132270777.html](http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-132270777.html) [2009, October]
- United Nations database. Available from: <http://data.un.org> [2009, October]
- United Nations. (1996). Prevention of Suicide: Guidelines for the Formulation and Implementation of National Strategies [Online]. New York. Available from: <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/suicideprevention/calltoaction.asp> [2009, October]
- Vijayakumar, L. (2003). Suicide Prevention: Meeting the challenge together. India: Orient Longman.
- Walsh, J. (2008). Why are Men More Likely to Commit Suicide After Divorce? Articlesbase [Online]. Available from: <http://www.articlesbase.com/divorce-articles/why-are-men-more-likely-to-commit-suicide-after-divorce-383186.html> [2009, October]
- Wasserman, M.I. (1984). Imitation and suicide. American Sociological Review 49(3): 427-436.

WHO database. Available from:

[http://apps.who.int/whosis/database/mort/table1\\_process.cfm](http://apps.who.int/whosis/database/mort/table1_process.cfm) [2009, October]  
and [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/media/repkor.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/repkor.pdf) [2009, October]

WHO. (1998). Primary prevention of mental, neurological and psychosocial Disorders [Online]. Geneva. Available from: <http://www.who.int/publications/924154516X.pdf> [2009, October]

WHO. (1999). Figures and facts about suicide. Geneva [Online]. Available from: [www.who.int/mental\\_health/media/en/382.pdf](http://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/382.pdf) [2009, October]

Yang, B, and Lester, D. (1995). Suicide, homicide and unemployment. Applied Economics Letters 2: 278-79.

Yang, B., Sark.S, and Lester, D. (1992). Suicide and unemployment: predicting the smoothed trend and yearly fluctuations. Journal of Socio-Economics [online]. Available from: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6W5H-45F9R09-C/2/c2f3fb438ad2d27f7efdd3ce3ceb4601> [2009, October]

Yang, N. (1998). An International Perspective on Socioeconomic Changes and Their Effects on Life Stress and Career Success of Working Women. SAM Advanced Management Journal [Online]. Available from: <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst;jsessionid=LQBbchMCcT5n4tF9ydk15pl263mYN1wq qFtzJjTzTDC5fT73D8kL!811041904!131650410?docId=5001372272> [2009, October]



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย





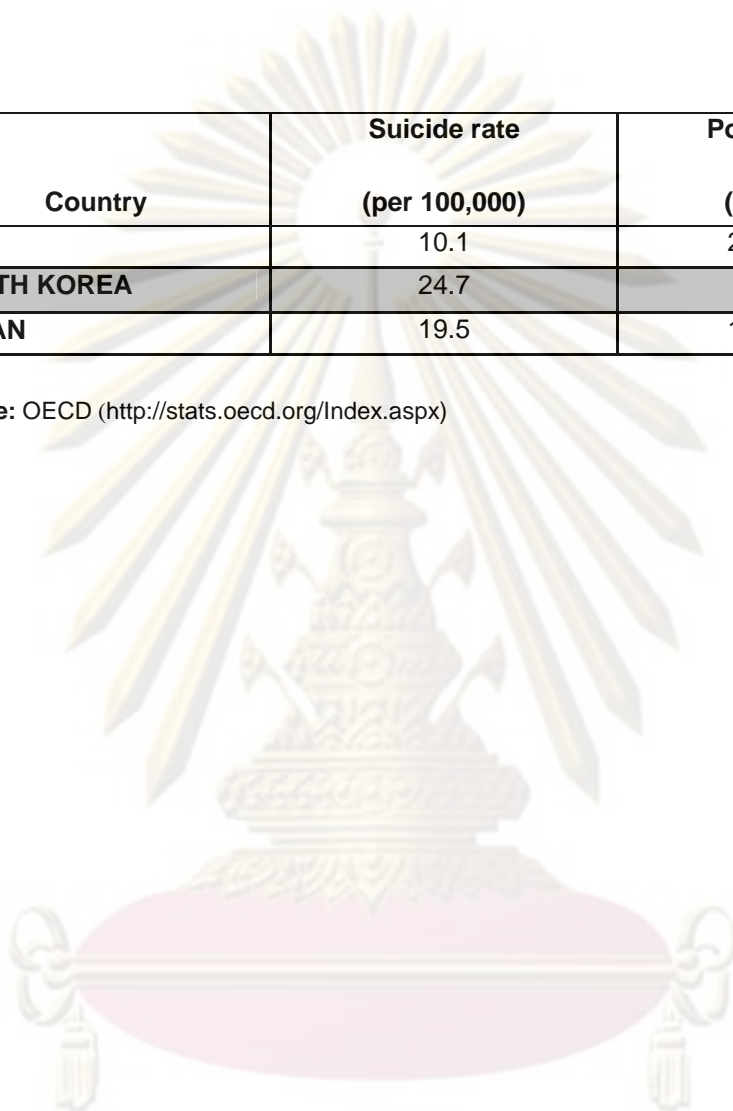
## **APPENDICES**

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

**Appendix A**  
**The comparison of suicide rate, 2005**

Country	Suicide rate (per 100,000)	Population (Million)
USA	10.1	295.895
SOUTH KOREA	24.7	48.138
JAPAN	19.5	127.767

Source: OECD (<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>)



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

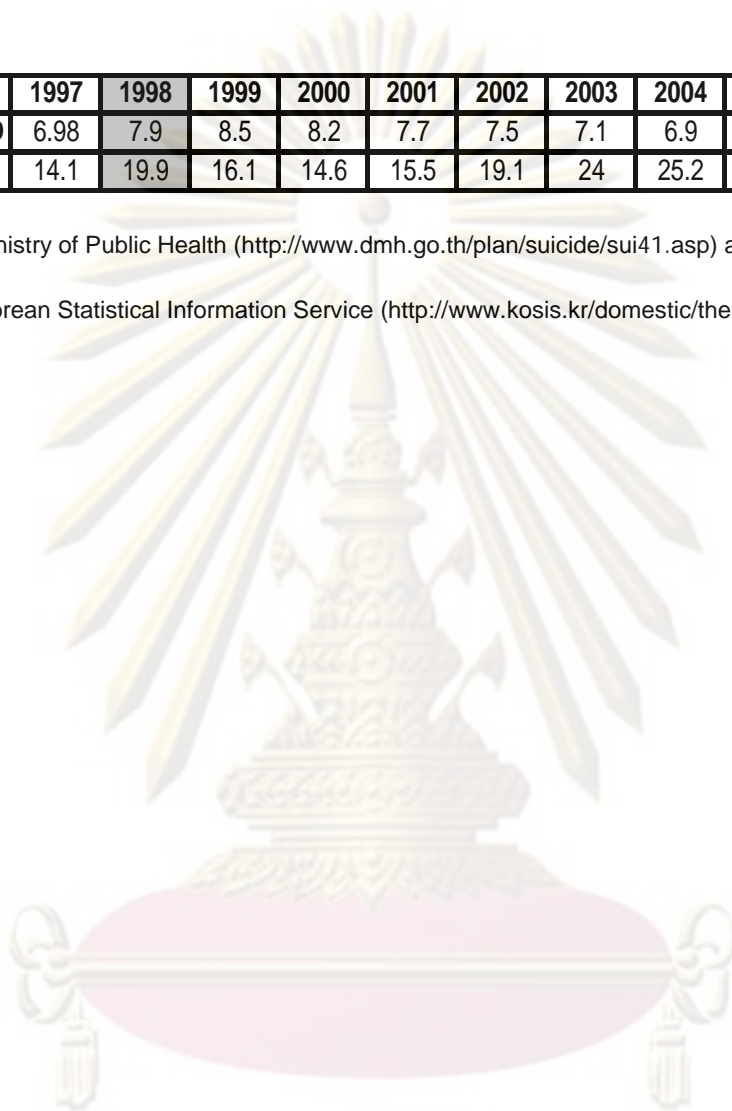
## Appendix B

### Suicide Rate: Thailand VS South Korea, 1997-2007

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
THAILAND	6.98	7.9	8.5	8.2	7.7	7.5	7.1	6.9	6.4	5.77	5.96
KOREA	14.1	19.9	16.1	14.6	15.5	19.1	24	25.2	26.1	23.2	24.8

**Source:** Ministry of Public Health (<http://www.dmh.go.th/plan/suicide/sui41.asp>) and

Korean Statistical Information Service ([http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp))

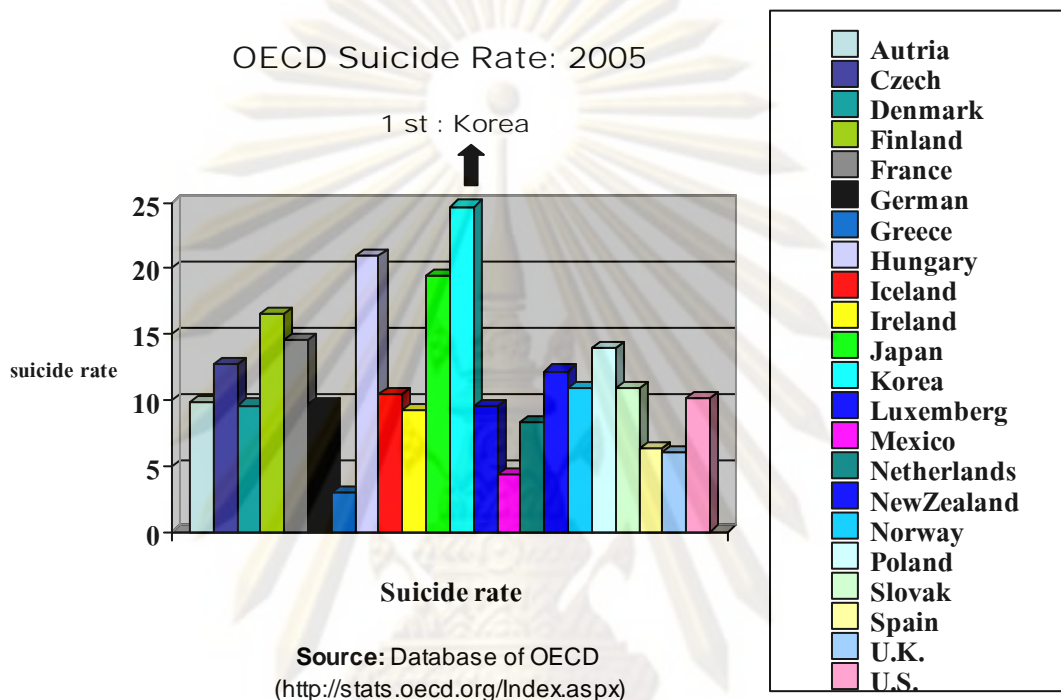


ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



## Appendix C

### International comparison among OECD



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

**Appendix D**  
**Cost of ill: Past VS Present**

Past	Present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort women</li> <li>• Colonization</li> <li>• Several wars</li> <li>• National humiliation</li> <li>• Dictatorship</li> <li>• Extended family under one roof</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Fever</li> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Breakdown of family and social networks (ex: divorce)</li> <li>• Increasing isolation: computer-dependency, nuclear family</li> <li>• Intense competition from childhood</li> <li>• Too much achieve-oriented</li> <li>• Etc.</li> </ul>


  
 ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
 จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## Appendix E

### Leading Causes of Death in Korea

Rank	1997	2003	2007
1	Malignant Neoplasms	Malignant Neoplasms	Malignant Neoplasms
2	Cerebrovascular	Cerebrovascular	Cerebrovascular
3	Heart Diseases	Heart Diseases	Heart Diseases
4	Transport Accidents	Diabetes Mellitus	<b>Suicide</b>
5	Disease of Liver	<b>Suicide</b>	Diabetes Mellitus
6	Diabetes Mellitus	Disease of Liver	Transport Accidents
7	Chronic Lower Respiratory	Chronic Lower Respiratory	Chronic Lower Respiratory
8	<b>Suicide</b>	Transport Accidents	Disease of Liver
9	Hypertensive Diseases	Hypertensive Diseases	Hypertensive Diseases
10	Respiratory Tuberculosis	Falls	Pneumonia

Source: Korean National Statistical Office, various data (<http://kostat.go.kr>)

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย



## Appendix F

### Statistic Data

Year	Child Dependency Rate	Aged Dependency Rate	Marriage no. (cases)	Marriage Rate (/1000)	Divorce no. (cases)	Divorce Rate (/1000)
1983	50.2	6.3	412,984	10.3	28,549	0.7
1984	48.2	6.4	385,188	9.5	35,772	0.9
1985	46.0	6.5	384,686	9.4	38,187	0.9
1986	43.9	6.6	390,229	9.5	39,132	0.9
1987	42.0	6.7	390,276	9.4	42,268	1.0
1988	40.2	6.9	410,129	9.8	42,757	1.0
1989	38.7	7.0	410,708	9.7	44,017	1.0
1990	36.9	7.4	399,312	9.3	45,694	1.1
1991	36.0	7.5	416,872	9.6	49,205	1.1
1992	35.3	7.7	419,774	9.6	53,539	1.2
1993	34.6	7.9	402,593	9.0	59,313	1.3
1994	33.9	8.1	393,121	8.7	65,015	1.4
1995	33.0	8.3	398,484	8.7	68,279	1.5
1996	32.2	8.6	434,911	9.4	79,895	1.7
1997	31.2	8.9	388,960	8.4	91,160	2.0
1998	30.5	9.3	373,500	8.0	116,294	2.5
1999	29.8	9.6	360,407	7.6	117,449	2.5
2000	29.4	10.1	332,090	7.0	119,455	2.5
2001	29.0	10.5	318,407	6.7	134,608	2.8
2002	28.6	11.1	304,877	6.3	144,910	3.0
2003	28.0	11.6	302,503	6.3	166,617	3.4
2004	27.4	12.1	308,598	6.4	138,932	2.9
2005	26.8	12.6	314,304	6.5	128,035	2.6
2006	25.9	13.2	330,634	6.8	124,524	2.5
2007	25.0	13.8	343,559	7.0	124,072	2.5
2008	24.1	14.3	327,715	6.6	116,535	2.4

**Source:**

**Dependency rate:** Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development  
(<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>)

**Marriage and divorce:** United Nations Database, Demographic Yearbook  
(<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dyb2.htm>)

**Statistic Data (continued)**

Year	GDP per capita (US\$)	Unemployment	Suicide no. (cases)	Suicide Rate (/100,000)
1983	2,124	4.1	3,471	8.70
1984	2,312	3.8	3,498	8.66
1985	2,368	4.0	3,802	9.32
1986	2,698	3.8	3,564	8.65
1987	3,360	3.1	3,425	8.23
1988	4,456	2.5	3,057	7.27
1989	5,428	2.6	3,133	7.38
1990	6,153	2.4	3,251	7.58
1991	7,119	2.3	3,151	7.27
1992	7,544	2.4	3,626	8.28
1993	8,200	2.8	4,202	9.49
1994	9,495	2.4	4,274	9.54
1995	11,490	2.0	4,930	10.89
1996	12,282	2.0	5,959	13.03
1997	11,276	2.6	6,068	13.14
1998	7,486	6.8	8,622	18.51
1999	9,583	6.3	7,056	15.02
2000	10,937	4.4	6,444	13.61
2001	10,243	4.0	6,911	14.49
2002	11,568	3.3	8,612	17.95
2003	12,806	3.6	10,898	22.61
2004	14,271	3.7	11,492	23.73
2005	16,533	3.7	12,011	24.69
2006	18,481	3.5	10,653	21.81
2007	19,841	3.3	12,174	24.82
2008	20,240	3.2	12,858	26.12

**Sources:**

**Suicide:** Korean Statistical Information Service ([http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01\\_index.jsp](http://www.kosis.kr/domestic/theme/do01_index.jsp))

**Unemployment and GDP per capita:**

United Nations Database (<http://data.un.org>)

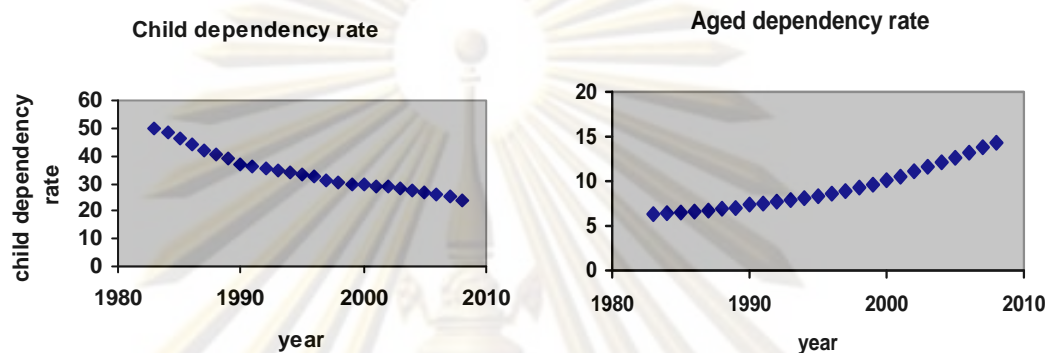
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>)

Nation Master ([http://www.nationmaster.com/red/graph/eco\\_gdp\\_percap-economy](http://www.nationmaster.com/red/graph/eco_gdp_percap-economy))

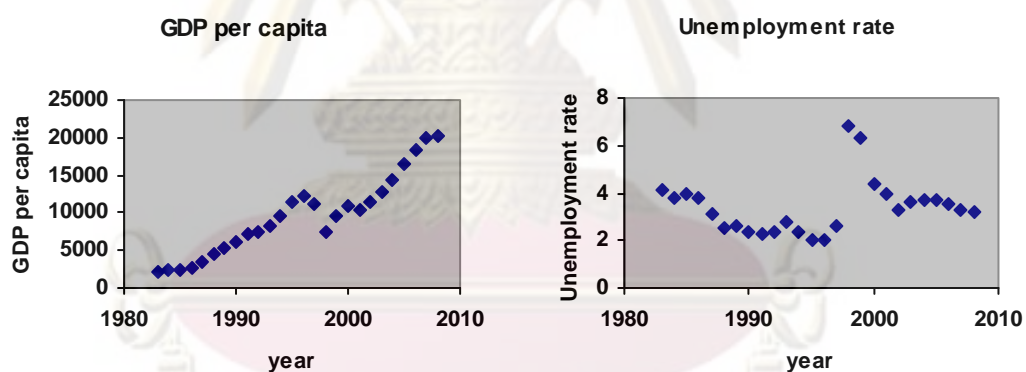
## Appendix G

### Scatter plot

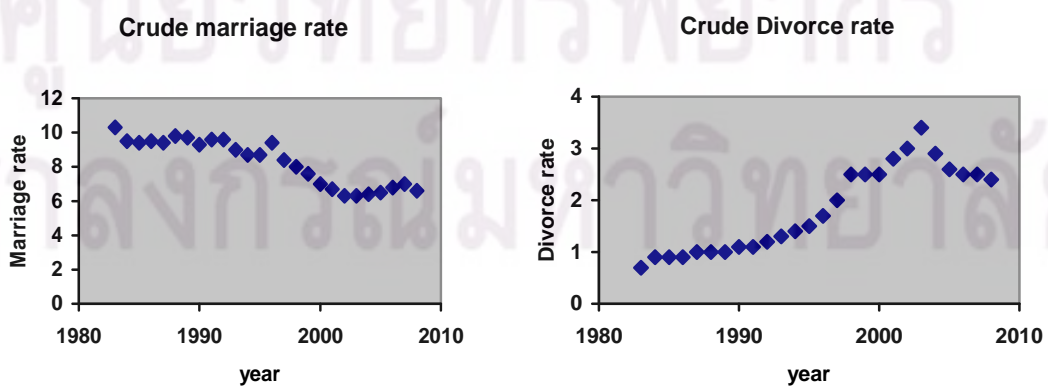
#### Demographic factor:



#### Economic factor:



#### Social factor:





## Appendix H

### Statistic findings: Correlation

Variables	Suicide rate
Child dependency rate	<b>-0.794</b> 0.000
Aged dependency rate	0.956 0.000
Crude marriage rate	<b>-0.889</b> 0.000
Crude divorce rate	0.858 0.000
GDP per capita	0.865 0.000
Unemployment rate	0.312 <b>0.121</b>

Cell contents: Pearson correlation

P-Value

With alpha-level of 0.05, Suicide rate has positive correlation with;

- Aged dependency rate
- Crude divorce rate
- GDP per capita

Suicide rate has negative correlation with;

- Child dependency rate
- Crude marriage rate.

\*\*The correlation between suicide rate and unemployment is unclear. \*\*

## Appendix I

### Best subset regression table

Vars	R-Sq	R-Sq (adj)	Mallow C-p	S	Dep (Child)	Dep (Aged)	Marriage Rate	Divorce Rate	GDP	Unemployment
1	91.4	91.0	17.1	1.9403		x				
1	79.0	78.2	72.9	3.0224			x			
2	93.6	93.0	9.1	1.7095		x				x
2	92.9	92.3	12.2	1.7987		x			x	
3	94.5	93.7	7.0	1.6211	x	x				x
3	94.5	93.7	7.0	1.6218	x	x		x		
<b>*4*</b>	<b>95.3</b>	<b>94.4</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>1.5348</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>x</b>		
4	94.9	94.0	6.9	1.5880	x	x		x		x
5	95.7	94.6	5.7	1.5074	x	x	x	x		x
5	95.4	94.3	6.8	1.5505	x	x		x	x	x
6	95.8	94.5	7.0	1.5199	x	x	x	x	x	x

- The best model is the model with high R-Sq, R-Sq (adj), low S (error standard deviation), and low Mallows C-p.
- Since C-p tends to find the best subset that includes only the important predictors of the dependent variable, a small Mallows C-p value indicates that the model is relatively precise (has small variance) in estimating the true regression coefficients and predicting future responses.
- So the best model with the lowest Mallows C-p is the model with 4 predictors, that is;
  - Dependency rate (Child)
  - Dependency rate (Aged)
  - Marriage rate
  - Divorce rate

ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

## APPENDIX J

### Results: Testing equation's creditability

After putting the value in the equation, the predicted result rate will be as follows;

No.	Year	Actual suicide rate	Predicted suicide rate	Differences
1	1983	8.70	9.91	-1.21
2	1984	8.66	8.78	-0.12
3	1985	9.32	8.01	1.31
4	1986	8.65	7.68	0.97
5	1987	8.23	7.50	0.73
6	1988	7.27	8.20	-0.93
7	1989	7.38	7.72	-0.34
8	1990	7.58	7.95	-0.37
9	1991	7.27	8.49	-1.22
10	1992	8.28	9.31	-1.03
11	1993	9.49	8.96	0.53
12	1994	9.54	9.19	0.35
13	1995	10.89	9.93	0.96
14	1996	13.03	12.86	0.17
15	1997	13.14	12.84	0.30
16	1998	18.51	15.36	3.15
27	1999	15.02	15.25	-0.23
28	2000	13.61	15.52	-1.91
19	2001	14.49	17.43	-2.94
20	2002	17.95	19.33	-1.38
21	2003	22.61	22.54	0.07
22	2004	23.73	21.79	1.94
23	2005	24.69	21.97	2.72
24	2006	21.81	23.66	-1.85
25	2007	24.82	25.62	-0.80
26	2008	26.12	25.62	0.50
	<b>Average</b>	<b>13.88</b>	<b>13.90</b>	<b>-0.02</b>

The total difference is only -0.02 per 100,000 populations, therefore, this model is applicable with high accuracy.



## Appendix K

### Confucian Doctrine

#### Confucianism:

“*Sinchae balbu suji bumo*” means that your body is a gift from your parents and harming it is being disrespectful. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, it was customary for South Koreans to not cut their hair and this is a good example of the above. (Cited in Vijayakumar, 2003)

In addition, Confucian ideals of benevolence (ren) and justice (yi) govern how one should live and die.

Confucian Thesis I: One should give up one's life if necessary, either passively or actively, for the sake of upholding the cardinal moral values of ren and yi.

Confucian Thesis II: One should actively terminate one's life for the sake of avoiding humiliation or upholding one's dignity. That means suicide is not strongly prohibited in South Korea. Unlike the western view regarding suicide as the act of cowardice, and Christianity made it a sin. In South Korea, however, notwithstanding some petty suicides committed by common people, many eminent figures used suicide to express their counter-cultural aspirations. These were praiseworthy suicides, and should by no means be rashly reproached by alien European value. There are some acceptable suicides as below;

- Suicide for the sake of the country (dynasty) and/or emperor;
- Suicide for the sake of the husband, who just passed away;
- Suicide for the sake of master;
- Suicide for the sake of the benefactor, as a token of gratitude;
- Suicide for the sake of a friend, especially those with whom one has entered into a pact of brotherhood
- Suicide for the sake of keeping a secret for somebody;
- Suicide for the sake of saving other lives;
- Suicide for the sake of avenging one's parents, husband, or master

**Sources:** Lo, P.C. edited by Fan R. (1999). Confucian Bioethics. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

## JUST IN CASE

### **Love-Line (Sarang - Jonwha) Counselling Centre**

Shingongduk-dong 9-22

Mapo-gu, SEOUL

**Hotline:** (2) 715 8600

**Hotline:** (2) 716 8600

**Hotline:** (2) 717 8600

**Hotline:** (2) 718 8600

**Website:** [counsel24.com](http://counsel24.com)

**24 Hour service:**

### **Cheju**

159 Ildo 2-dong

CHEJU

**Hotline:** (064) 52 9191

### **Choongju**

178-5 Sungnae-dong

Choongju

380-010, CHOONGBUK

**Hotline:** (0441) 847-9191

### **Chunju**

PO Box 103

Chunju, 560-600

CHUNBUK

**Hotline:** (0652) 86-9191

### **Inchon**

Insung Bldge, 3rd Floor

988-2 Jooan 6-dong, Nam-Ku

402-206, INCHON

**Hotline:** (032) 421 9191

### **Puchon**

2nd 105-7 Wonmi-dong, Wonmi-Ku

Puchon, 420-110

KYUMGKIDO

**Hotline:** (032) 663-9191

### **Pohang**

414-15 Nambin-dong Buk-Ku

Pohang, 791-040

KYUNGBUK

**Hotline:** (0562) 72-9191

### **Koyang**

Hyungjae Bld 499-2 Sungsa-dong

Duchyang-Ku

Koyang, 411-020

KYUNGKIDO

**Hotline:** (0344) 915-9191

**Kimhae**

305-20 Suhsang-dong  
Kimhae  
621-030  
KYUNGNAM  
**Hotline:** (0525) 21-9191

**Ulsan**

627-20 Sinjung 1-dong, Nam-Ku  
Ulsan  
680-011  
KYUNGNAM  
**Hotline:** (0522) 67-9191

**Pusan**

607-1 Chunpo 4-dong, Pusanjin-Ku  
614-044  
PUSAN  
**Hotline:** (051) 807-9191

**Lifeline National Office**

607-1 Chunpo 4-dong  
Pusanjin-Ku  
614-044  
PUSAN  
**Hotline:** (82) 51 804 0896

**West Seoul Saengmyung Eui Chunhwa**

917-1 Mok-dong  
Yangchon-Ku  
SEOUL  
**Hotline:** (81) 2 2649 9232/4

**Seoul**

KPO Box 1259  
110-612  
SEOUL  
**Hotline:** (02) 916-9191

**Taegu**

2014-204 Daemyung 8-dong  
Nam-Ku, 705-600  
TAEGI  
**Hotline:** (053) 475-9191

**Taejon**

Kukmin Bank, 4th 1194 Samchon-dong  
302-220  
TAEJON  
**Hotline:** (042) 254-9191

**Source:** Suicide.org

(<http://www.suicide.org/hotlines/international/south-korea-suicide-hotlines.html>)

# BIOGRAPHY

**Name** : Ms. Ranshida Ingpanya  
**Date of birth** : December 30, 1978  
**Birth Place** : Bangkok, Thailand  
**Education** : Bachelor of Business Administration, Marketing Major,  
Assumption University, Bangkok, Thailand (1994-1998)  
**Work Experiences** : Private Business (1998 - Present)



ศูนย์วิทยทรัพยากร  
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย