

**A study on change and determinants of South
Koreans' Perceptions of Unification.**

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A study on change and determinants of South Koreans' perceptions on Unification

Executive Summary

South Koreans' interest in and aspirations for unification have decreased recently. This decrease of desires for unification is one of the obstacles to achieve unification. This study analyzes the change of South Koreans' perceptions of unification and examines various factors that affect those perceptions toward unification. I use unification perceptions survey data from 2007 to 2014 collected by the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies Seoul National University.

The dependent variables of this study are perceptions of the necessity of unification and the possibility of unification. Independent variables are classified into four types. They are expected benefit factors, the political factor, national identity factors and demographic factors. Expected benefit factors are perceptions of the economic consequences of unification for South Korea and for the individual. The political factor is ideology. The national identity factors are perception of North Korea and friendship with North Koreans. The demographic factors are sex, education, income and age.

I use multiple regressions to test the effect of independent variables. Perception of national benefit and personal benefit, ideology, perception of North Korea, friendship with North Koreans, sex, age, and education have a significant effect on the dependent variables.

The results of this study show that a large number of people are pessimistic about the necessity and possibility of unification. Also, the perception of unification is different according to perception of benefit, ideology, national identity and demographic factors such as sex, age, and education. To gain the support of the public for unification, the South Korean government will need to address the factors identified in this study.

Introduction

The division of Korea began in 1948. South and North Korea have suffered a national tragedy of systemic rivalry, slander, and even war. At the beginning of the division, the unification of North and South Korea was recognized as a critical national task. South Koreans sang a song called 'Our wish is unification' and taught the next generation to have a desire for unification. Therefore, the perception that unification is a necessary task was very strong. However, as the division of South and North Korea has continued for a long time, South Koreans' perceptions of unification have changed. According to Chosun Ilbo(2014), more and more people have come to think that unification is unnecessary or that the possibility of unification is low. Chosun Ilbo reports a survey that showed that only about 50% of the South Koreans perceive that unification is necessary. There is also a big difference between generations in terms of the perception of the necessity of unification and the perception of the possibility of unification. The younger generation had less desire for unification than the older generation and the attitude of the younger generation toward the possibility of unification was negative. (Chosun ilbo 2014). In addition, women showed less desire for unification than men. Also, conservative people had less desire for unification than progressive people, and had a negative attitude toward the possibility of unification.

South Koreans' perceptions on unification are a very important factor in achieving unification because they will be the subjects of unification. It is difficult to achieve unification without South and North Koreans' desire to have a unified Korea. If South Koreans have a hostile attitude about North Korea, it is difficult to accomplish peaceful unification. Unification that is accomplished without agreement upon a vision of a future unified Korea could trigger much confusion. If people think that unification is not necessary

or impossible, it will be very difficult to achieve unification. In addition, it is difficult for the government to pursue a policy contrary to the public's perceptions in a democratic society. Therefore, South Korean's perceptions of unification are very important factors for the achievement of unification.

To make successful unification policies, it is necessary to analyze how the Korean people perceive unification. It will also be necessary to analyze and confirm why the perceptions of the people have changed and which factors influence perceptions toward unification. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the change of people's perceptions of unification and identify what factors influence South Koreans' perceptions of unification.

Literature Review

Introduction

Many researchers have studied people's perceptions of unification. I will briefly introduce the existing research trends on perceptions of unification.

Definition of unification, perceptions on unification.

The meaning of unification in South and North Korea can be defined as the process of eliminating the mutual distrust caused by the division of history and creating a new ethnic community where the residents of the South and the North can coexist. (Sim et al 2013) , Perceptions of unification can be defined as thoughts or values about division and nationality, differences between the two Koreas, cultural heterogeneity, the justification and process of unification, and challenges after unification. This definition includes the ability to judge the value of unification, the things that can appear in the process and the attitude expressed throughout. (Sim et al 2013)

Trends of social surveys on unification perceptions.

Surveyors have surveyed students and adults about perceptions of unification with North Korea since the 1980's. While several surveys use similar questions and scales, comparison across all surveys is difficult because they do not use identical questions and scales. Fortunately, several surveys on unification and North Korea after 2000 implement repeat questions and scales to make it possible to trace changes in perceptions over time. (Eun Gi Soo(2010).

Studies on the Change of perceptions on unification.

Kim, Hyun Oak (2001) studied the components and inner conflict structure of perceptions of unification. This study shows that people's perceptions of unification were weakened, especially among the younger generation. In Hee Hamn and Han Jeong Ja (2000) explored differences in unification perceptions, focusing on people who were born in the 1960's, the youth, and women. This study shows that interest in and aspiration for unification among the young generation and females were lower than those among the old generation and males. Interest and aspiration for unification is highest among people born in the 1960's. Also, this group regards North Korea as a cooperative partner. (In Hee hamn and Han Jeong Ja 2000). A number of studies analyzing the unification perceptions of adolescents and university students have been conducted. (Byeon Jong-Heon 2012; Kwon Young-Seung & Lee Soo-Jung 2011). These studies reveal a gap in the attitudes toward unification between the young and the older generations. In other words, those in their 20s in South Korean society are generally low in interest in and understanding of North Korea, and gradually become indifferent to the unification of North and South Korea. These studies also show that the tendency to approach the issue of unification from a social, rational perspective rather than an

emotional perspective is increasing.

The characteristics of South Korean's unification perceptions in previous research can be comprehensively summarized as follows. First, the extent to which unification is perceived to be necessary has weakened. (Kim, Hyun Oak(2001), In Hee hamn and Han Jeong Ja(2000), Byeon Jong-Heon 2012; Kwon Young-Seung and Lee Soo-Jung 2011). South Koreans think that unification should be pursued carefully rather than as a matter of fact. This suggests that people's aspirations for unification have weakened or that South Koreans have started to think about unification from a cost-benefit perspective rather than as a matter of course. (Byeon Jong-Heon 2012). Second, ethnic and emotional aspects of unification are still effective. One of the most representative reasons for unification is that South and North Koreans are one people. (Lee, Nae- Young (2014). Reasons for denying the necessity of unification are various: first is antagonism toward and distrust of North Korea; second is distrust of the fact that unification will create economic benefits and strong military power; third is resistance to enormous economic and non-economic costs, which will be involved in the unification process. (In Hee hamn and Han Jeong Ja(2000), Lee, Nae- Young (2014)

Studies on the determinants of perceptions on unification.

Lee Sung - Woo (2013) found that political factors had a greater effect on the perception of unification than economic factors and social expectation factors. Lee, Nae- Young (2014) suggested that age, sex, ideology, solidarity with North Korea, and expected benefits affect the perceptions of unification. Jang Min-Soo and Kim Jun Suck(2015) argue that attitudes toward North Korean people, political interest, ideology, education level, sex, generation, and region influence the perceptions of unification. Lee, Nae-Yong (2014) categorizes these factors in four ways. Factors affecting perceptions of unification are categorized into socio-

demographic factors, political factors, national identity factors and expected benefit factors. Back Dae-Hyun and Lee Jae-Wan (2015) suggested that factors of unification cost and benefits affected unification perceptions and attitudes.

The factors found to affect perceptions toward unification can be comprehensively summarized as follows. First are demographic factors. Age, sex, education, and region affect perceptions of unification. Older people, men, and educated people showed a positive perceptions toward the necessity and possibility of unification, as opposed to the younger generation, females and uneducated people, who showed a negative attitude.(In Hee hamn and Han Jeong Ja(2000), Byeon Jong-Heon 2012; Kwon Young-Seung and Lee Soo-Jung 2011) Second are political factors. Ideology and political interest affect perceptions of unification. Progressive people have stronger aspiration and interest in unification than conservative people. (Lee, Nae-Yong (2014), Jang Min-Soo and Kim Jun Suck(2015). Third are national identity factors. Perceptions of North Korea and North Koreans affect perceptions of unification. The desire and interest in unification of those who consider North Korea as the same people and same ethnicity is stronger than the desire and interest of those who do not consider them the same people and same ethnicity. (Lee, Nae-Yong (2014). Fourth are economic factors. Perceptions on economic preparation, economic benefit and economic cost affect the perceptions of unification. (Back Dae-Hyun amd Lee Jae-Wan). Finally, expected benefits affect the perceptions of unification. Those who have a high expectation of benefits resulting from unification have stronger interest in and aspiration for unification. (Lee, Nae-Yong (2014)

Research Design

Research design

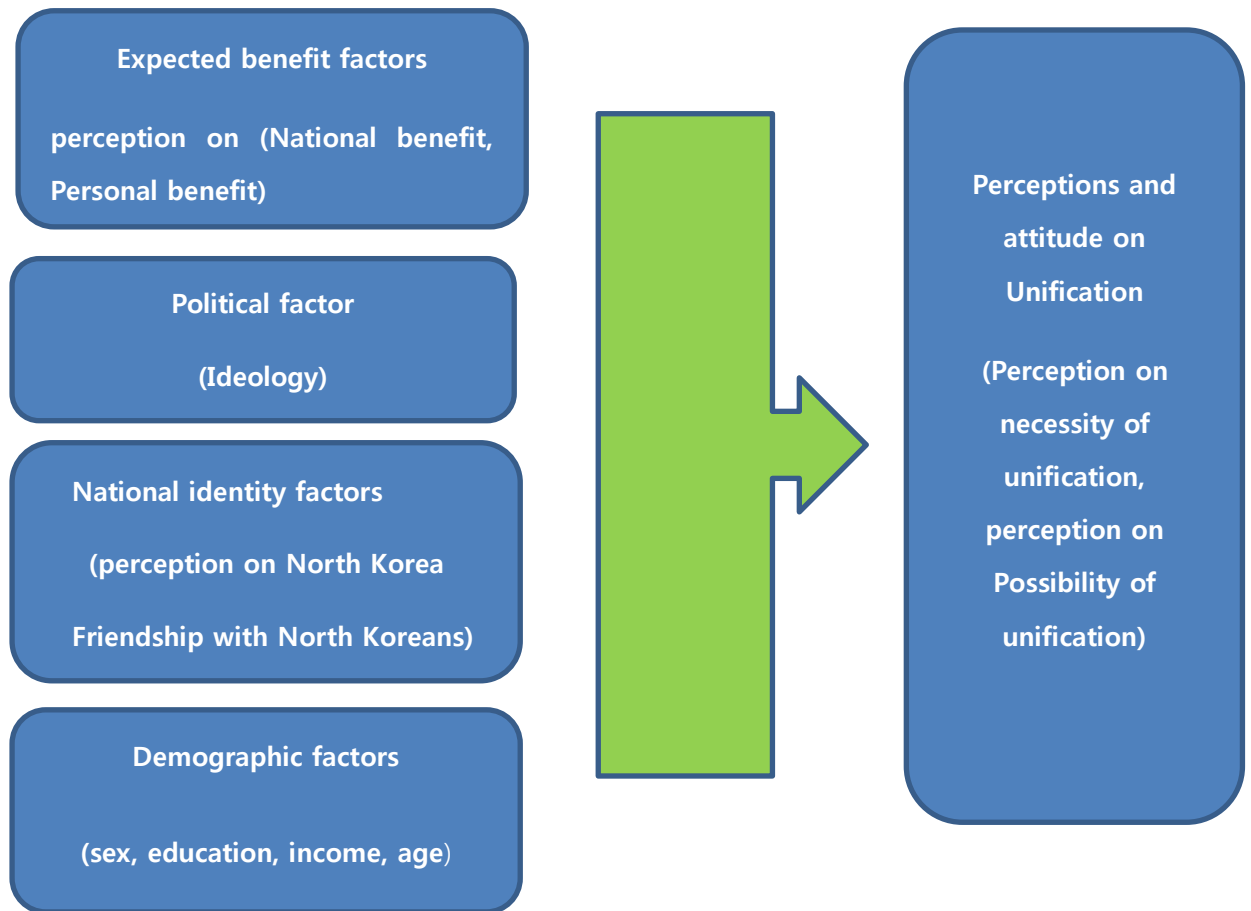
South Koreans' interest and aspirations for unification have decreased recently. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the tendency of people's perceptions of the unification and identify what factors influence these perceptions. Trends of unification perceptions will be measured by two components: the perception of the necessity of unification and the perception of the possibility of unification. In addition to this task, this paper will identify what factors influence these two components using multiple regressions. Most of the previous research just portrays differences in perception of unification according to demographic factors, or only considers demographic factors that influence perception of unification using data from short period, which is less than 3 years. It is very rare to analyze trends of unification perceptions through empirical data which is collected over 3 years and to analyze various factors influencing unification perceptions. The aim of this study is to analyze the change of South Koreans' perception of unification using 8 years of empirical data and to identify and confirm various factors affecting perception of unification. This study reflected the existing framework of previous research comprehensively, and tried to make the most reasonable research framework by selecting and including the most important factors.

Data

I used the unification perceptions survey conducted by The Institute for Peace and Unification Studies Seoul National University from 2007 to 2014. This survey targeted men and women aged 19 to 65 from all 16 provinces. This survey collected data on 1,200 people each year, with a sample error of $\pm 2.8\%$ at the 95% confidence level. This survey used multi-stage stratified sampling and relied on a one to one individual interview method, using a structured questionnaire. This survey questionnaire contained about 150 questions concerning South Koreans' attitudes on unification, on North Korea, on North Korean policy,

on North Korean defectors, and on their relationship with neighboring countries. I exclude from the analysis the questionnaires which had no response or contained ‘I do not know’ responses.

Basic Framework of the study



Dependent variables

The dependent variables of this study are perceptions of the necessity of unification and the possibility of unification. First of all, I used the following question, “How much do you think unification is necessary for North and South Korea? Or do you think it is not necessary?” to measure perceptions of the necessity of unification. Available answers are: 1). not

necessary at all; 2). a little bit unnecessary; 3). half and half; 4). a little bit necessary; 5). very necessary. Secondly, I use the following question, “When do you think unification is possible?” to measure perceptions of the possibility of unification. Answer options for this question were the following: 1). Impossible; 2). more than 30 years; 3). within 30 years; 4). within 20 years; 5). within 10 years; 6). within 5 years. After this survey, people’s responses to these two questions were coded to measure their relationship with independent variables.

Independent variables

I divided independent variables into four options: They are expected benefit factors, the political factor, national identity factors, and demographic factors. Expected benefit factors are perceptions of economic consequences for unification to South Korea (perception of national benefit) and for the individual (perception of personal benefit). Political factor is South Koreans’ ideology. National identity factors are perceptions of North Korea and friendship with North Koreans. Demographic factors are sex, education, income, and age.

I used the following question, “How do you think reunification will give benefits to South Korea?” to measure perceptions on national benefits of unification. I used the following question “How do you think reunification will benefit you?” to measure perceptions of the private benefits of unification. Available answers are: 1). not at all profitable; 2). not very profitable; 3). a little bit profitable; 4). very profitable.

From previous research, I can make the following hypothesis: the more people think that the profit from unification is going to be large, the greater the likelihood that the respondent views reunification as necessary and likely to happen.

I used the following question “ Do you think you are politically progressive? Or do you

think you are conservative?” to measure the political factor. Available answers are: 1). very conservative; 2). a little bit conservative; 3). moderate; 4). a little bit progressive; 5). very progressive.

From previous research, I can make the following hypothesis: Progressive people feel more strongly about the necessity of unification than the conservatives and are more optimistic about the possibility of unification.

I used two questions to measure national identity factors. First of all, I used the following question, “What do you think North Korea is for us?” to measure South Koreans’ perceptions of North Korea. Answers are as follows: 1). hostile target that threatens our safety; 2). target we should watch out for; 3). competing target with South Korea; 4). cooperation-needed target (we should cooperative with North Korea); 5). assistance- needed target (We should help North Korea). Finally I used the following question, “How friendly do you feel to North Korean defectors who are living in South Korea?” to measure friendship with North Koreans. Answers are as follows. 1). not at all friendly; 2). a little bit unfriendly; 3). a little bit friendly. 4). very friendly.

From previous research, I assume the following hypothesis: the more people who have a strong sense of national ties to North Korea or North Koreans, the more strongly they feel the need for unification and are optimistic about the possibility of unification.

I used sex, age, education, and income as control variables. From previous research, I assume the following hypotheses: younger generations feel weaker about the necessity of unification than older generations and will be pessimistic about the possibility of unification; males will respond more positively to the necessity of unification than females and will be more optimistic about the possibility of unification than females.

Table 1. Summary of Variables and Predicted effect on perceptions of unification

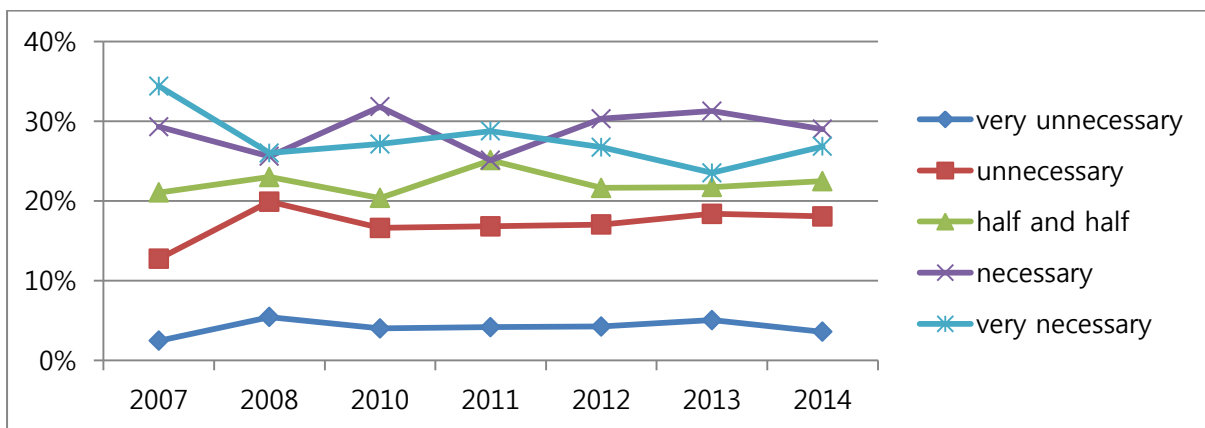
Category	Variable	Scales	Predicted effect on perception of Unification
Dependent variables	Perception on necessity of unification	1. Not at all necessary 2.A little bit unnecessary. 3. Half and half. 4. A little bit necessary. 5. Very necessary.	
	Perception on Possibility of unification	1. Impossible. 2. More than 30 years. 3. within 30 years . 4. within 20 years. 5. within 10 years 6. within 5 years.	
Expected benefit factors	Perception on national benefit	1. Not at all profitable. 2. Not very profitable 3. A little bit profitable 4. Very profitable.	positive
	Perception on personal benefit	1. Not at all profitable. 2. Not very profitable. 3. A little bit profitable. 4. Very profitable.	positive
Political factor	Ideology	1. Very conservative. 2. A little bit conservative. 3. Moderate. 4. A little bit progressive. 5. Very progressive.	positive
National identity factors	Perception on North Korea	1. Hostile target. 2. Watching out target. 3. Competing target. 4. Cooperation-needed target 5. Assistance-needed target.	positive
	Feeling of friendship with North Korean defectors	1. Not at all friendly. 2. A little bit unfriendly. 3. A little bit friendly. 4. Very friendly.	positive
Demographic factors	Age	1.20~29, 2.30~39, 3.40~49, 4.50~	positive
	Sex	Male=1, female=2	negative
	Education	1.under middle school,2.high school, 3.More than high school	positive
	Income(Won)	1. Under 2,000,000, 2,2,000,000-2,990,000, 3.3,000,000-3,9990,000,4. More than 4,000,000	negative

Data Description

I. Dependent variables

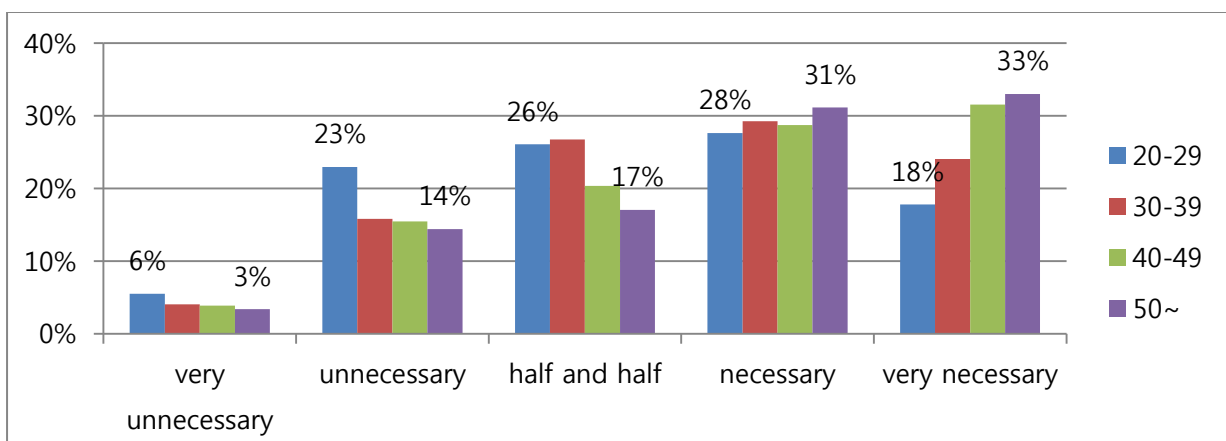
1. Perception on necessity of unification.

Figure 1. Perception on necessity of unification by all respondents



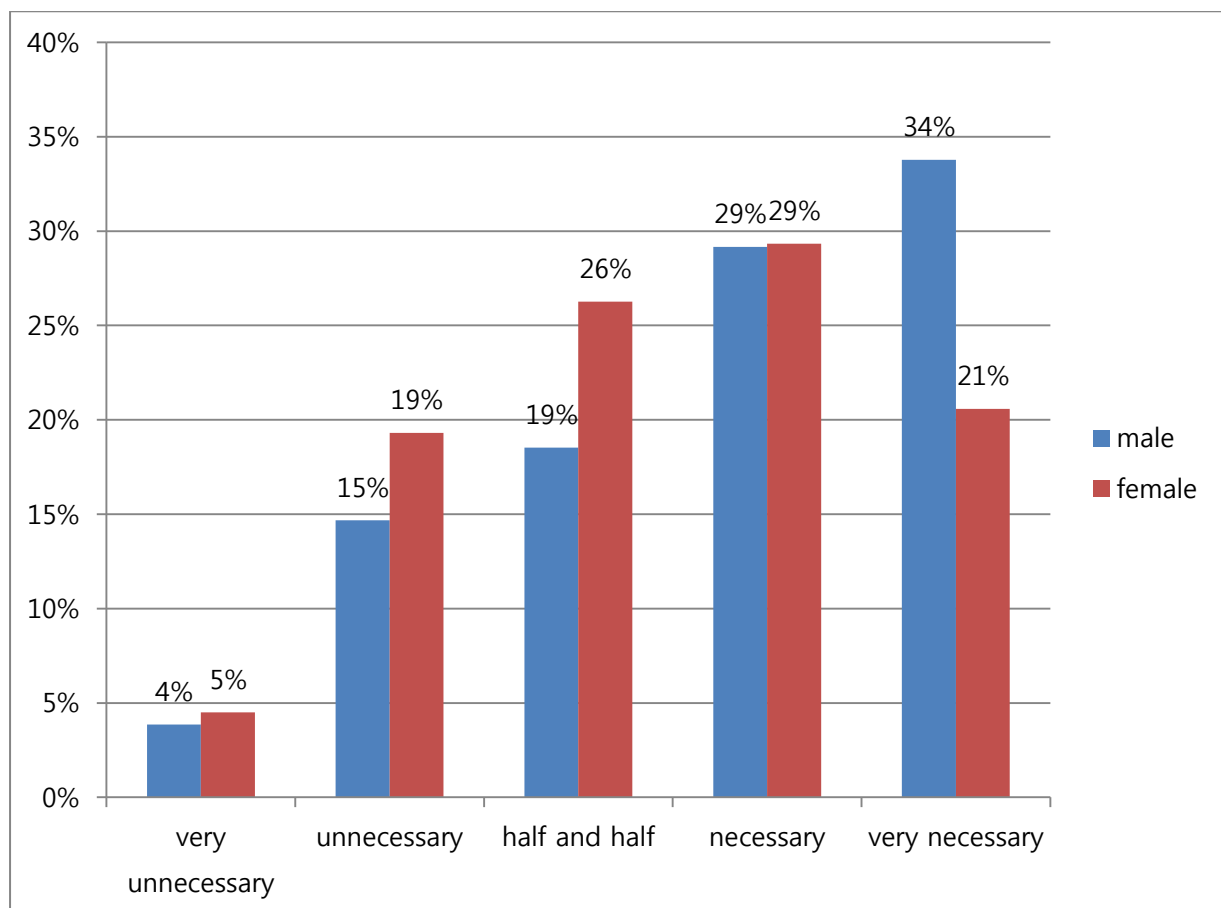
First, the percentage of people who think that unification is necessary and very necessary account for more than 50% every year. This result shows that a lot of people still think that unification is necessary. However, the percentage of respondents who say that unification is unnecessary, very unnecessary, and half and half is also a significant proportion close to 40%.

Figure 2. Perception on necessity of unification by age (2007-2014)



By age, younger generations have a stronger perception that unification is unnecessary than older generations. In the case of respondents in their 20s, only 46% perceived that unification is necessary or very necessary. On the other hand, 64% of respondents who are 50 or older perceive that unification is necessary or very necessary. In the case of respondents in their 20s, 29% perceived that unification is unnecessary or very unnecessary. On the other hand, only 17% respondents who are 50 or older perceive that unification is unnecessary or very unnecessary. As a result, we can see that perception of unification has a big gap among generations.

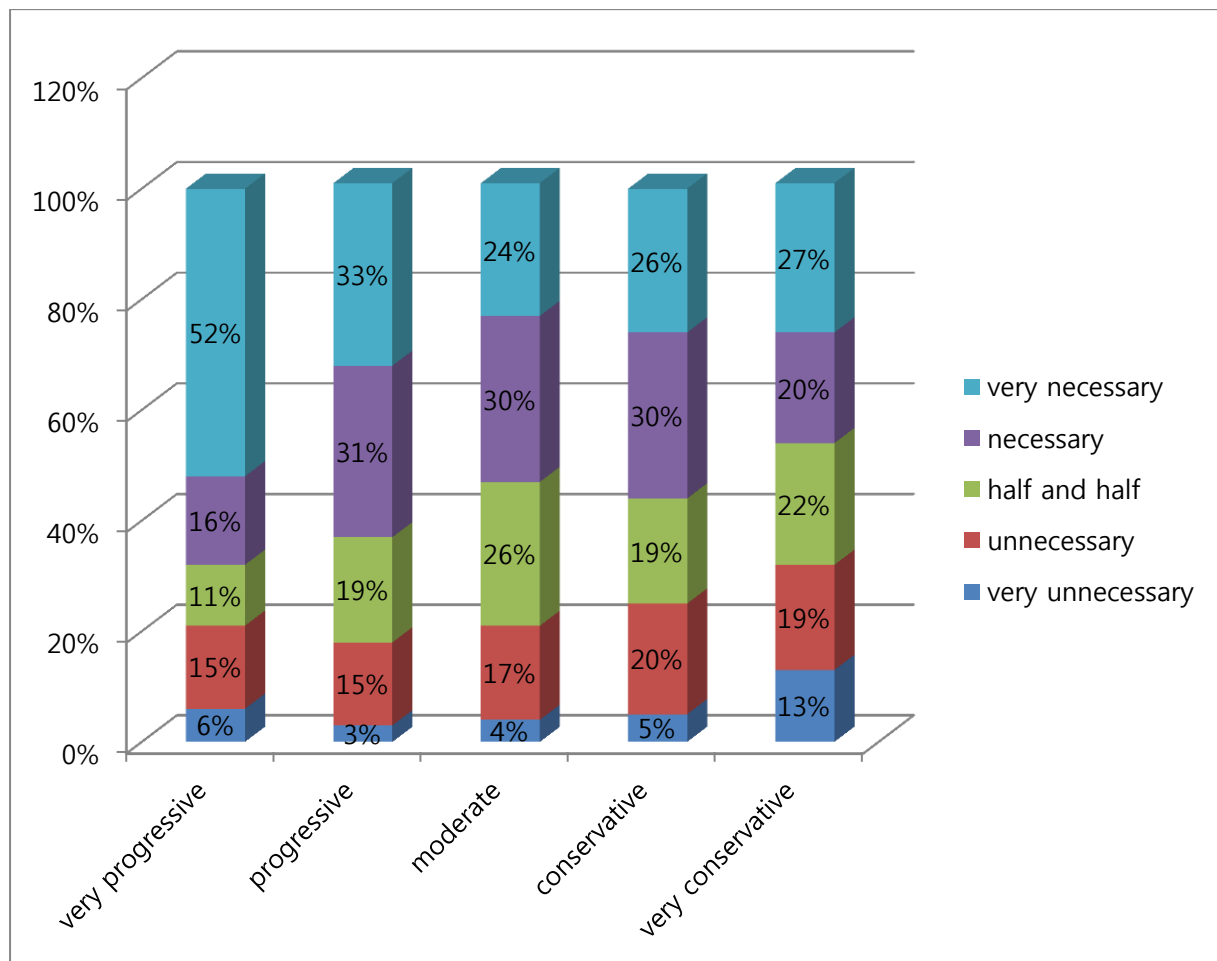
Figure 3. Perception on necessity of unification by sex (2007-2014)



There are considerable gaps in the perception of necessity of unification between males and females. In the case of women, 19% of respondents answered that they think that

unification is unnecessary, while only 15% of men answered that unification is unnecessary. For men, 34% of respondents think that unification is very necessary, while only 21% of women think that unification is very necessary.

Figure 4. Perception on necessity of unification by ideology (2007-2014)



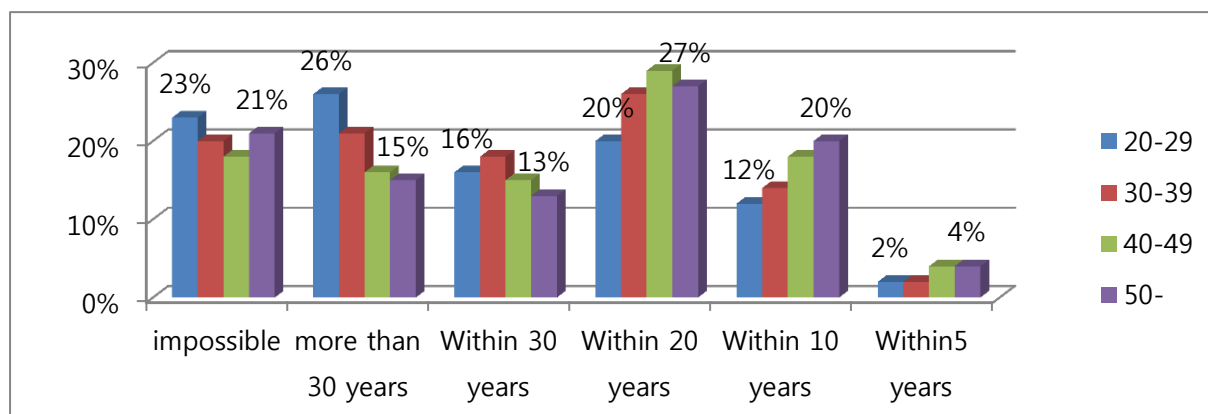
According to ideological tendencies, progressive people have a stronger perception that unification is necessary than conservative people. In the case of highly progressive respondents, 52% perceived that unification is very necessary, significantly higher than 27% of highly conservative respondents.

2. Perception and attitude on possibility of unification

Table 2. Perception on possibility of unification by all respondents

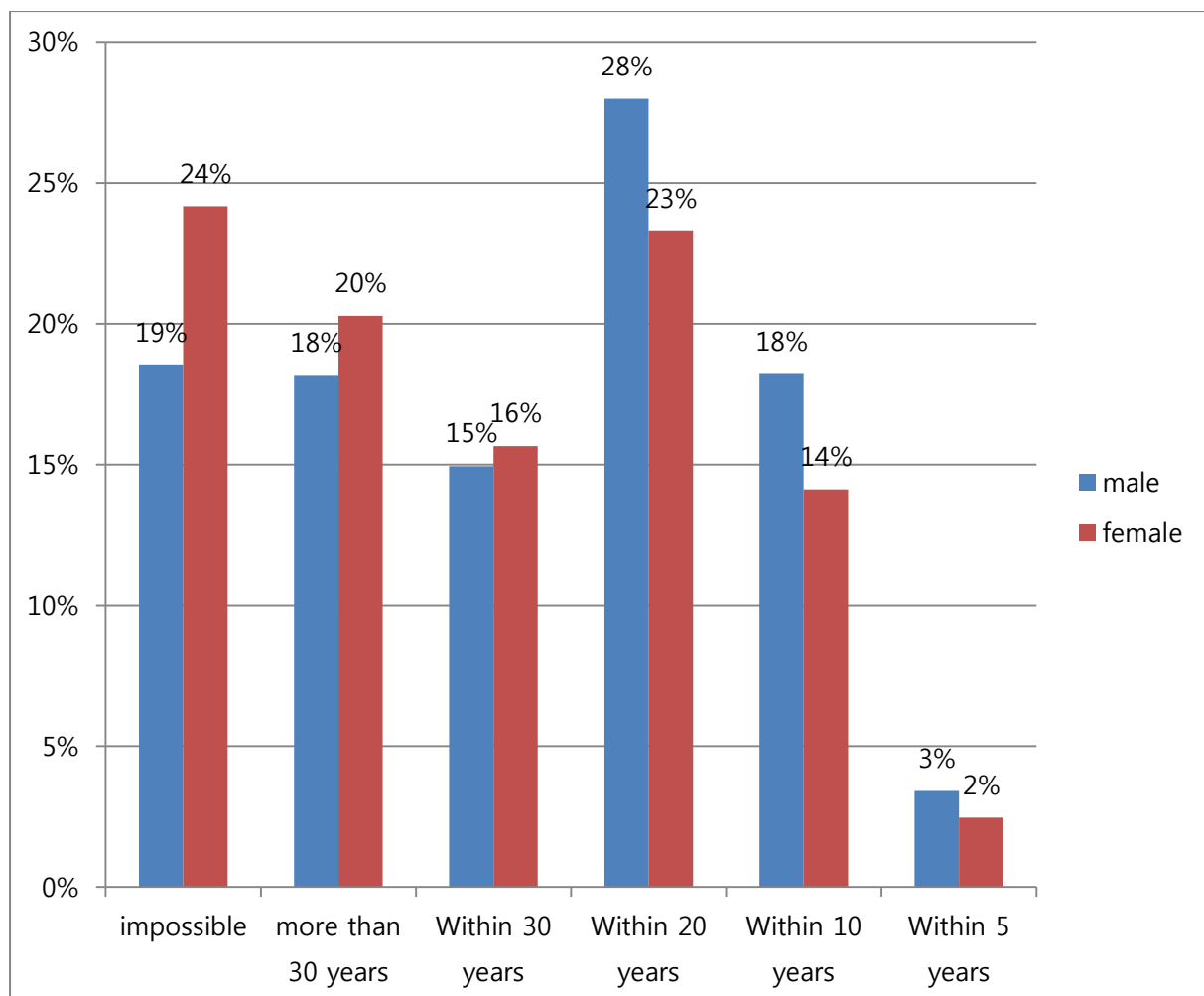
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
impossible	13%	22%	20%	21%	21%	19%	25%	24%
more than 30 years	14%	25%	16%	21%	20%	20%	18%	20%
Within 30 years	15%	15%	16%	13%	14%	18%	14%	18%
Within 20 years	31%	22%	28%	24%	26%	26%	26%	22%
Within 10 years	23%	13%	17%	18%	16%	14%	13%	14%
Within 5 years	4%	2%	3%	3%	2%	3%	4%	2%

The response concerning the possible time for unification varies from the perception that reunification is possible within five years to the pessimistic perception that it is impossible. One of the important characteristics of the period of unification is that the table shows that the rate of respondents who believe that unification is impossible was consistently about 20% from 2008 to 2012. In addition to this, this ratio rose to 25% and 24% in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Evidently, there is a strong perception that unification is impossible or that unification is unlikely to happen within 30 years.

Figure 5. Perception on possibility of unification by age (2007-2014)

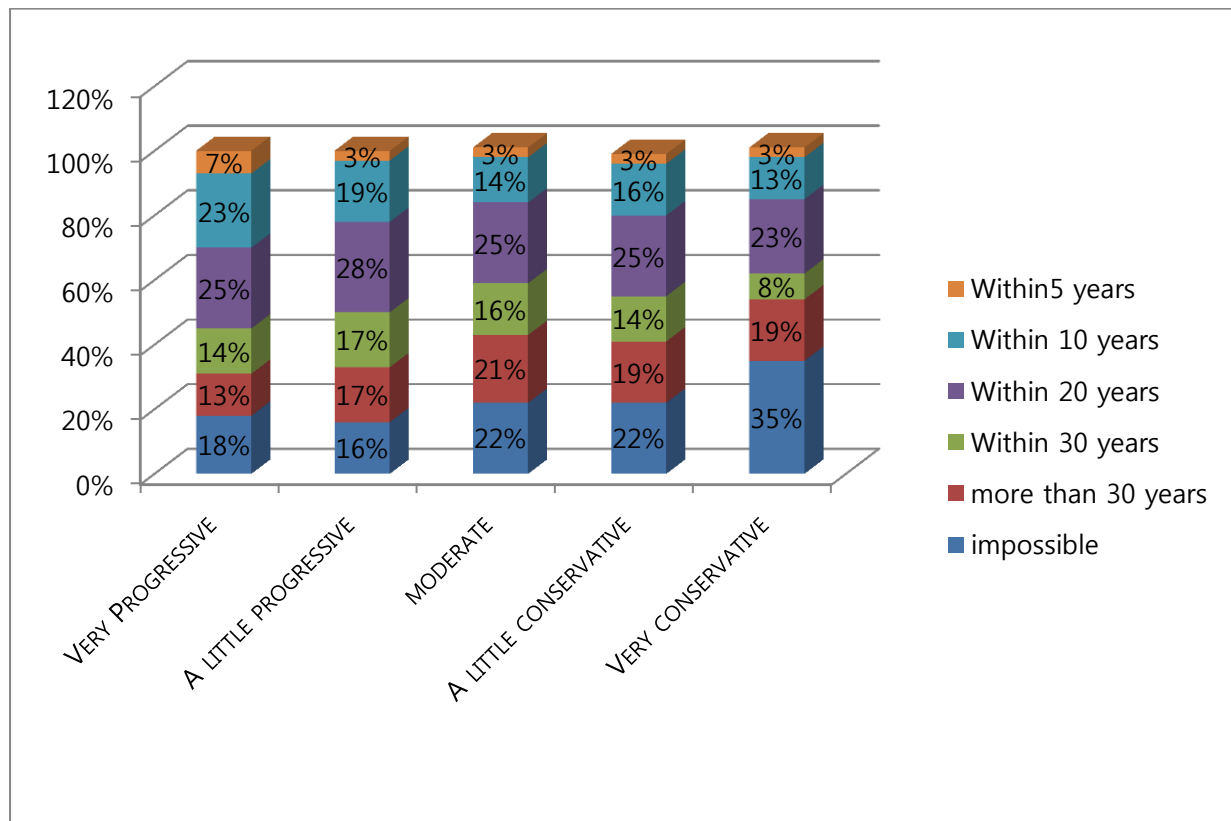
The younger generation has a more pessimistic attitude on the possibility of unification than the older generation. Fourth nine (49) % of the 20's respondents think that unification will take more than 30 years or is impossible. On the other hand, 36% of respondents over 50 think that unification will take more than 30 years or is impossible.

Figure 6. Perception on possibility of unification by sex (2007-2014)



Females have a more pessimistic attitude on the possibility of unification than males. In the case of females, the rate of respondents who believe that unification is impossible is 24%, which is significantly higher than that of men, which is 19%. On the other hand, 18% of males answered that unification is possible within 10 years, which is 4% higher than 14% of females.

Figure 7. Perception on possibility of unification by ideology (2007-2014)



This figure shows that progressive respondents tend to be more optimistic about the possibility of unification than conservative respondents. In the case of very conservative respondents, the rate of ‘unification is not possible’ is 35%, which was significantly higher than the proportion of very progressive respondents, 18%. On the other hand, only 13% of very conservative respondents said that unification is possible within 10 years, while 23% of the very progressive respondents said the same.

Table3 Correlation between two dependent variables

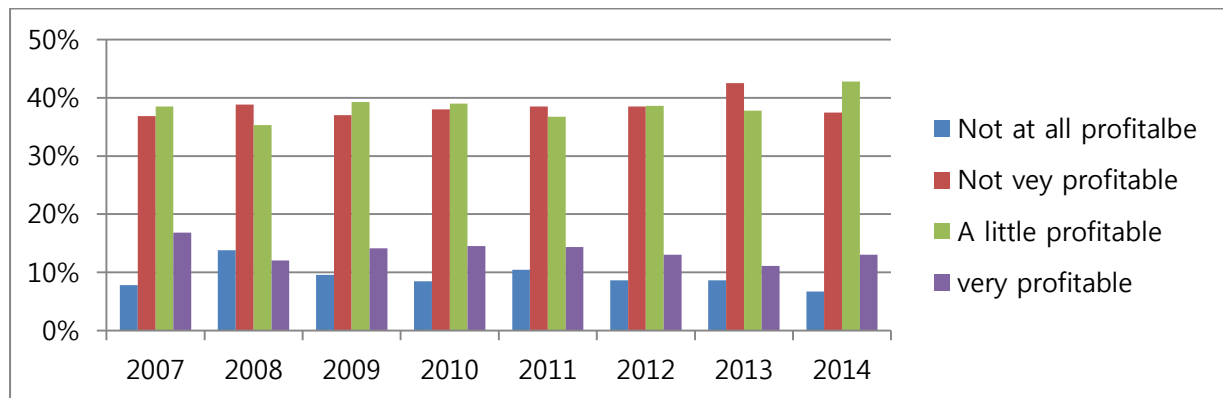
	Perception on necessity of unification	Perception on possibility of unification
Perception on necessity of unification	1	
Perception on possibility of unification	0.4891	1

Two dependent variables showed significant correlation. However, the correlation was less than 0.5.

II. Independent Variables

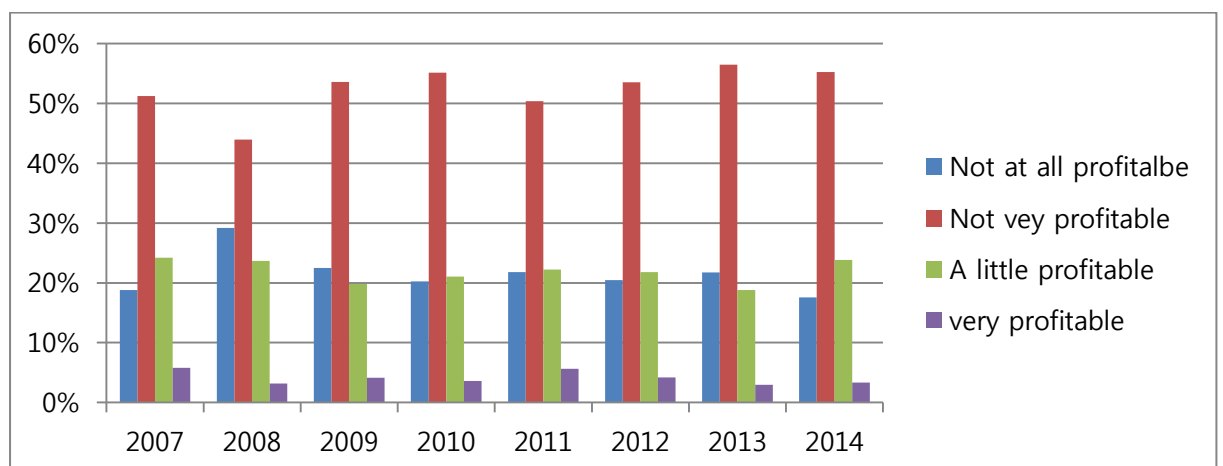
1.Expected benefits factors

Figure 8. Perception of expected benefits to South Korean society.



About 50% of the respondents think that unification will give benefits to South Korean society; 50% of the respondents think that unification will not give benefits to South Korean society.

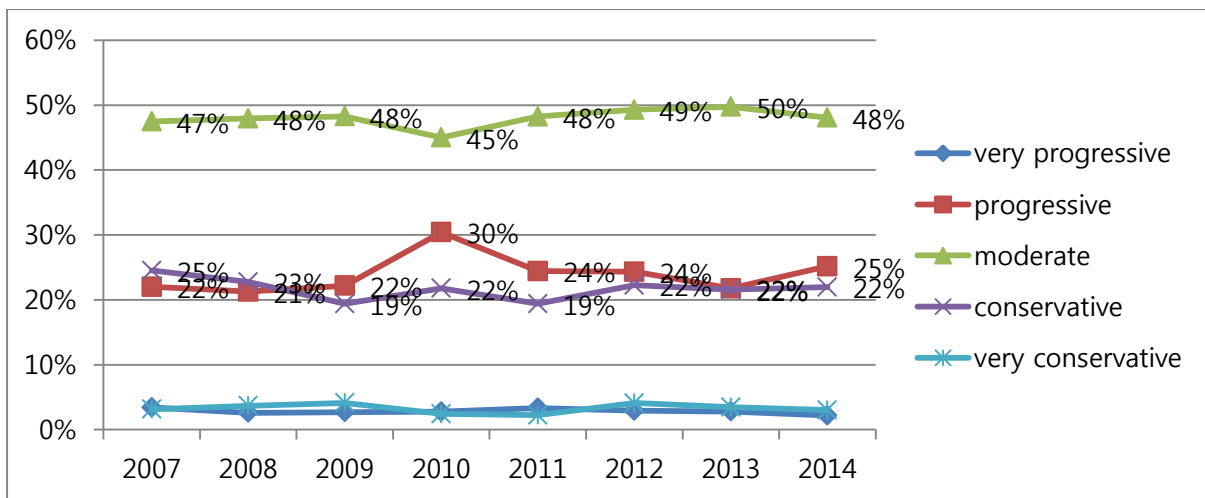
Figure 9. Perception of expected benefits to individuals.



More than 70% of respondents think that unification will not benefit individuals. The rate at which unification benefits individuals is significantly lower than the rate at which unification benefits South Korean society.

2. Political factor

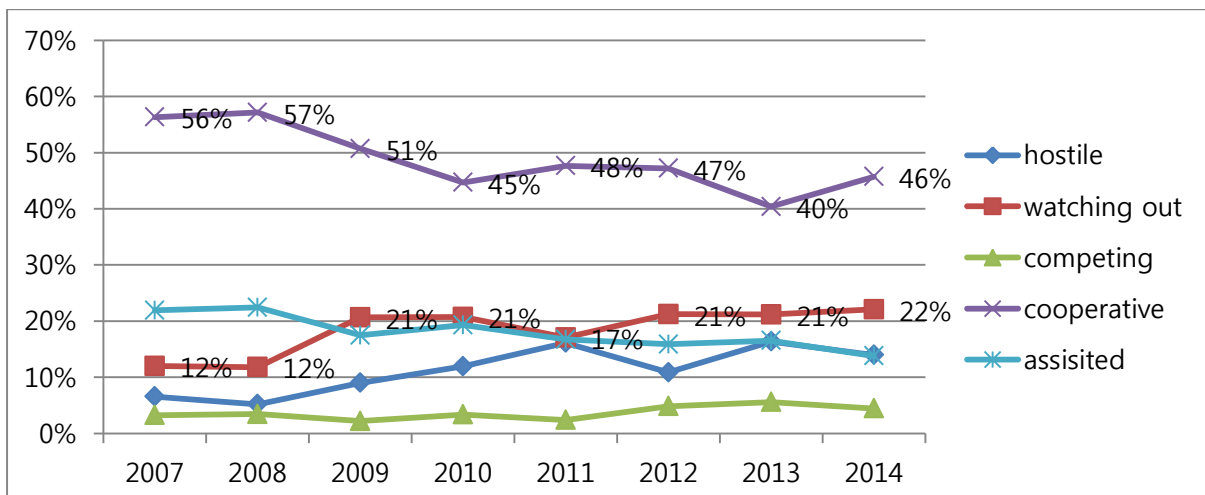
Figure 10. Distribution of ideology of respondents.



In the case of ideology, the ratio of the respondents remains constant without any major change. The highest proportion of respondents is moderate (about 50%) followed by progressive and conservative.

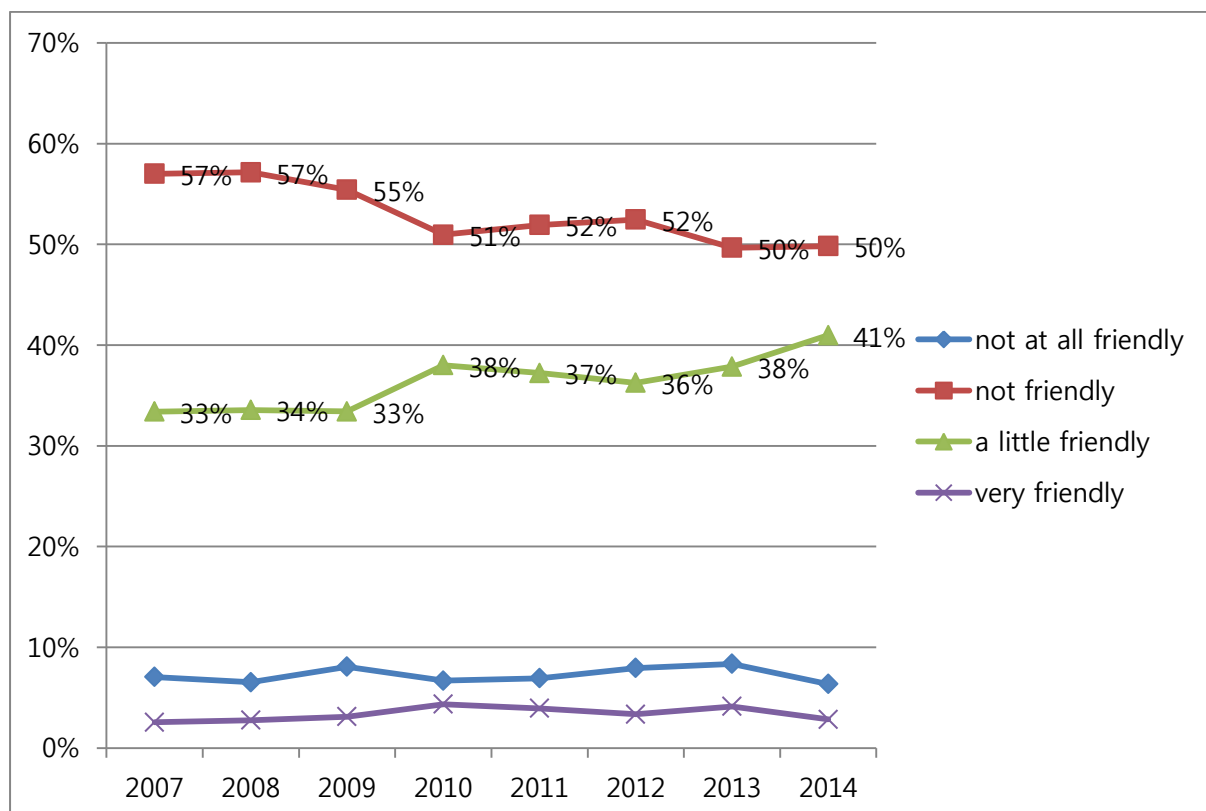
3. National identity factors

Figure 11. Perception of North Korea



The perception of North Korea as the target of cooperation is the strongest, and that ratio is gradually decreasing. The percentage recognizing North Korea as a cooperative target was highest at 57% in 2008, but it dropped to around 40% after 2010. The ratio of those who consider North Korea as a watching-out target rose from 12% in 2007 to 22% in 2014. The proportion of those who consider North Korea as a target of assistance has continued to decline. Comprehensively, the ratio of people seeing North Korea as a friendly nation is gradually declining while the ratio of people seeing North Korea as an opponent is gradually increasing. This may be due to North Korea's continuous nuclear development and persistent military threats.

Figure 12. Feeling of friendship with North Korean defectors



Although the proportion of people who believe that North Korea is a hostile target has increased, the friendship toward North Korean defectors has been gradually increasing. This phenomenon shows that the perception of North Korea and the perception of North Korean people can be dual and conflicting.

4. Demographic factors

Table 4. Descriptive statistics (Age, Sex, Education, Income (Manwon))

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
20-29	25%	22%	25%	25%	22%	21%	21%	21%
30-39	26%	25%	26%	26%	24%	23%	23%	22%
40-49	25%	29%	26%	25%	26%	26%	26%	25%
50-	23%	24%	23%	23%	28%	30%	31%	32%
Male	50%	50%	50%	50%	51%	51%	51%	51%
Female	50%	50%	50%	50%	49%	49%	49%	49%
Under middle school	13%	12%	11%	9%	9%	9%	10%	8%
high school	42%	47%	41%	39%	43%	46%	48%	43%
more than high school	45%	41%	48%	53%	48%	45%	42%	49%
Income under 200(Manwon)	23%	20%	19%	17%	17%	13%	12%	9%
200-299	31%	33%	29%	26%	24%	26%	22%	19%
300-399	25%	28%	30%	28%	32%	31%	32%	33%
more than 400	21%	19%	22%	29%	26%	30%	34%	39%
Total(number)	1,177	1,195	1,191	1,197	1,171	1,197	1,186	1,196

Analysis and Findings

The aim of this study is to analyze factors that affect South Koreans' perceptions of unification. I use multiple regressions to determine the effect of independent variables on perceptions of unification.

Table 5. Regression result of determinants on perception of necessity of unification

VARIABLES		Perception and attitude on necessity of unification	Standard errors
Expected benefit factors	Perception of national benefit	0.412***	(0.0164)
	Perception of personal benefit	0.232***	(0.0170)
Political factor	Ideology	0.0687***	(0.0130)
National Identity factors	Perception of North Korea	0.119***	(0.00877)
	Friendship with North Korean defectors	0.151***	(0.0163)
Demographic factors	Age	0.194***	(0.0110)
	Female	-0.166***	(0.0212)
	Education	0.0686***	(0.0197)
	Income	-0.00368	(0.0106)
	Year	-0.0158***	(0.00462)
	Observations	9,510	
	R-squared	0.276	

Robust Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 5 shows that expected benefit factors have substantial effects on attitudes about the necessity of unification. Perception of national benefit and perception of personal benefit have positive and significant effects on perception of the necessity of unification. Perception of the national benefit variable has a stronger effect (0.412) than perception of the personal benefit variable (0.232)

Age and sex also have a significant effect on perception of necessity of unification. Age has a positive relationship with perception of necessity of unification. This shows that older people perceive that the unification is necessary more strongly than younger generations. This phenomenon might be caused by the older generation's experience. Sex has a negative relationship with perception of necessity of unification. Also, this shows that males perceive that the unification is necessary more strongly than females. Also, education has a positive effect on perception of necessity of unification. Finally, income has no significant effect on perception of necessity of unification.

National identity factors have a positive effect on perception of necessity of unification. 'The feeling of friendship with North Korea defectors' variable has a slightly stronger effect (0.151) than perception of North Korea (0.119). This result shows that the more people identify with North Korea or North Koreans, the more strongly they perceive that unification is necessary.

Finally, ideology has a positive effect on perception of necessity of unification. This result shows that more progressive people perceive that unification is necessary than conservative people.

Table 6. Regression result of determinants on perception of possibility of unification

	VARIABLES	Perception of possibility of unification	Standard errors
Expected benefit factors	Perception of national benefit	0.331***	(0.0209)
	Perception of personal benefit	0.230***	(0.0230)
Political factor	Ideology	0.0754***	(0.0174)
National Identity factors	Perception of North Korea	0.146***	(0.0115)
	Friendship with North Korea defectors	0.172***	(0.0221)
Demographic factors	Age	0.196***	(0.0149)
	Female	-0.171***	(0.0285)
	Education	0.124***	(0.0272)
	Income	0.00487	(0.0144)
	Year	-0.0454***	(0.00622)
	Observations	9,510	
	R-squared	0.163	

Robust Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The result of regression on perception of possibility of unification shows that all independent variables except income have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. The expected benefits factors have the strongest effect on perception of possibility of unification and the political factor has the smallest effect.

‘The perception of national benefit’ variable and perception of personal benefit have a positive and statistically significant effect on perception of possibility of unification. ‘The perception of national benefit’ variable has a stronger effect (0.331) than the perception of personal benefit variable (0.230). Also, expected benefits factors have a smaller effect on perception of possibility of unification than on perception of necessity of unification.

Age and education variables have a positive and statistically significant effect on perception of possibility of unification. Sex has a negative effect on perception of possibility of unification. This shows that males have a more positive attitude toward possibility of unification than females. Income has no significant effect on perception of possibility of unification. The effect of age on perception of possibility of unification is slightly stronger (0.196) than its effect on perception of necessity of unification (0.194). Also, in the case of sex and education, the effect on perception of possibility of unification is stronger than the effect on perception of necessity of unification.

This table shows that perception of North Korea and friendship with North Korean defectors has a positive and statistically significant effect on perception of possibility of unification. The effect of friendship with North Korean defectors has a slightly stronger effect (0.172) than perception of North Korea (0.146). The effect of these two national identity factors on perception of possibility of unification is stronger than their effect on perception of necessity of unification.

Finally, ideology has a positive and statistically significant effect on perception of possibility of unification, but the size of the coefficient is relatively smaller (0.0754) than other independent variables.

Limitations.

In order to analyze determinants of perceptions on unification, I used 9 independent variables. However, other factors that I did not consider can affect the perceptions of unification.

First of all, economic factors can affect the perceptions of unification. Economic factors such as unemployment rate, per capita income, and prices may have affected the perceptions toward unification. In general, it can be said that economic trends affect people's perceptions of unification. Therefore, good and bad economies can affect the perceptions of unification.

Secondly, perception of international relationships can affect the perception of unification. Unification of Korea is an area of intertwined interests which involves not only the two Koreas but also various countries such as the United States, Japan, China and Russia. Therefore, I think that international relations among these countries and South Koreans' perceptions of international relations can affect the perceptions of unification.

Finally, government policy can affect the perceptions of unification. The new presidents of South Korea took office in 2008 and 2013, respectively, and the unification policy has changed significantly. The change of unification policy can affect South Koreans' perceptions of unification.

Conclusion and recommendations

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the perception of necessity of unification and the perception of possibility of unification have changed over time, and to find the factors that affect the perceptions of unification. First, both the raw percentages and the regression analysis indicate that support for unification has declined over time. Second, about 50% of the respondents responded that unification is necessary. What is noteworthy is that there are many differences in perception of the necessity of reunification based on age, sex, and ideology. Younger generations, females, and conservative people perceive that unification is unnecessary more strongly than older generations, males and progressive people. Regression analysis of the factors affecting the perception of necessity of unification shows that the expected benefits factors of unification have the largest effect. Next, demographic factors such as age and sex have the second largest effect. Thirdly, national identity factors have a considerable effect. Finally, the political factor has a statistically significant effect, but the strength is not high.

The perception of the possibility of unification is very diverse. Younger generations, females, and conservative people are more pessimistic about the possibility of unification than older generations, males, and progressive people. Regression results for factors affecting the perception of possibility of unification shows that expected benefits factors have the largest effect; the same goes for the perception of necessity of unification. Demographic factors have the second largest effect and national identity factors also have a considerable effect. Demographic factors and national identity factors have a stronger effect on perception of possibility of unification than perception of necessity of unification. The political factor has a statistically significant effect, but its effect is weakest among all factors.

The results of this study show that a large number of people are pessimistic about the necessity and possibility of unification. Also, the perception of unification is different according to age, sex, ideology, and education. Unification policies that are not supported by the people in a democratic society are hard to implement. The South Korean government will be able to establish a unification policy supported by the people through an in-depth analysis of the factors affecting the perception of unification.

The results of this study show that South Korean government should consider various factors to positively affect the people's perceptions of unification. First, the government needs to research what the benefits of unification are and present them persuasively. Second, improving relations with North Korea and establishing intimate and friendly relations with North Korea can have a positive impact on the perceptions of unification. Finally, it is necessary to deeply study why unification perception varies according to sex, age, education, and ideology, and develop customized strategies to affect perceptions of unification for each factor. Also, I recommend that it is necessary to accumulate the panel data to measure the change of perceptions of unification accurately.

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