

연구논문

## **Cultural Shifts in Pandemic Crisis: Examining the Differential Impact of COVID-19 on Omnivorous Cultural Consumption**

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This study investigates cultural consumption patterns before and after the onset of COVID-19, with a particular focus on changes in the determinants of cultural consumption. Utilizing coarsened exact matching to assess datasets collected in 2019 and 2022, multilevel modeling reveals that post-pandemic cultural consumption not only diminishes but also exhibits less associations with factors such as age, educational level, and household income compared to the pre-pandemic era. The results reveal a shift in the significance of cultural capital, as indicated by participation in diverse cultural events held in public venues. An unexpected leveling in omnivorous cultural consumption post-pandemic is mainly driven by younger, more educated, and affluent individuals. This trend suggests that disparities in adaptability to navigate limited cultural options due to external shocks are at play, rather than a true democratization of cultural participation.

Key words: cultural consumption, cultural participation, cultural capital, COVID-19, coarsened exact matching

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## I. Introduction

From a sociological perspective, heavily influenced by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), the consumption of culture and art is frequently regarded as a manifestation of cultural capital, playing a role in concealing and perpetuating unequal social positions. Extensive literature has diligently sought to contribute to the stratification of cultural tastes and lifestyles, identifying pivotal factors that shape them within various societal and historical contexts. It is observed that the evolving contemporary manifestation of cultural capital has transitioned from a snobbish orientation to that of a cosmopolitan omnivore (Peterson 1992; 1997). This shift is substantiated by diverse societal contexts, including the examination of US society (for a review, see Karademir Hazır & Warde 2018).

However, the unprecedented pandemic crisis has thrown the established cultural landscape into fundamental turmoil. Although the crisis is gradually ameliorating over a span of approximately two years, there remains a necessity for vigilance, as some of the enduring effects left by the Covid-19 pandemic have not been fully identified nor appraised with a realistic yardstick. While several studies have explored the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on cultural consumption and lifestyles (Codagnone et al. 2021; Bakhishi et al. 2022; Biondo et al. 2022; Feder et al. 2023; Reyes-Martínez & Andrade-Guzmán 2023), two limitations are evident. Firstly, these studies lack a clear explanation of diverse patterns in cultural stratification. Secondly, they predominantly focus on the impact during the pandemic or the ongoing period, specifically preceding 2022. Consequently, determining the enduring effects of Covid-19 on our cultural lives as we transition into a post-pandemic phase becomes challenging.

Despite the relatively short duration of the pandemic, spanning approximately two years, individuals were compelled to swiftly adapt to urgent demands imposed by governments. Their primary objective was to prevent and minimize the spread of the contagious disease through restrictions on in-person contact and physical gatherings. These measures inevitably posed impediments to cultural and arts activities. Anticipating an equivalent level of resilience in individuals' cultural pursuits during the pandemic is unrealistic. Those who previously engaged in diverse cultural events may make substantial lifestyle adjustments, transitioning to alternative modes of cultural and leisure consumption. Consequently, it can be inferred that cultural practices or the embodied form of cultural capital, as articulated by Bourdieu (1986), which were predominant in the pre-pandemic era-characterized by physical presence at various cultural events-may lose their significance in the post-pandemic era.

Unraveling the potential changes in the social gradient of cultural consumption patterns during the pandemic is crucial, as it sheds light on the dynamic nature of cultural capital, a concept central to Bourdieu's work (1984; 1986; 2002). However, the question of how cultural repertoires covary with macrosocial change has rarely been explored. To address this gap, the study examines the transformation of connections between various determinants and cultural consumption due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The primary focus is on analyzing changes in the determinants of cultural consumption to assess the persistence or inconsistency of cultural capital, as manifested through diverse cultural consumption, during the pandemic. If the connection between cultural consumption and socioeconomic indicators weakens, the symbolic representation of social inequality may be perceived as eroding, at least in the context of cultural participation in public facilities. Addressing this inquiry enhances our understanding of the significant, yet often overlooked, societal disparities in cultural consumption. This exploration hones in

on the evolving dynamics between inequality and cultural preferences within a shifting societal backdrop. For this, it draws on two waves of data that capture comparable time points to illustrate the pandemic's impact.

## II. Theoretical background

### 1. *Cultural consumption as a marker of social privilege*

Cultural consumption is widely recognized as a distinct indicator of cultural capital, as established through the literature on cultural stratification. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1984) theoretical perspectives, scholars have consistently explored the invisible yet systematic links between cultural tastes or lifestyles and socioeconomic backgrounds (Warde & Gayo-Cal 2009; Roose et al. 2012; Coulangeon 2017; Leguina & Miles 2017; Flemmen et al. 2018). Individuals with higher advantages, such as increased household income or educational attainment, are more likely to exhibit broad or 'omnivorous' cultural repertoires (Peterson 1992). This phenomenon is further nuanced by the dynamics of contemporary societies, characterized by social mobility (Friedman 2012) and generational shifts, wherein younger individuals often adopt new modes of distinction compared to their older counterparts (Lizardo & Skiles 2012; 2015).

Bourdieu (1984) considers cultural practice as a form of cultural capital, which involves the deeply embedded ability and preferences for symbolic products acquired during individual socialization. This process is significantly shaped by family background and access to resources, strongly implying the reproduction of social class through invisible forms of investment. Cultural capital contributes to the perpetuation of income inequality (Reeves & De

Vries 2019) and seamlessly translates into economic capital, influencing employment opportunities in the labor market (DiMaggio & Mohr 1985; Rivera & Tilcsik 2016). Additionally, and more importantly for the approach taken in this study, Bourdieu sees cultural repertoires as reflective of the social structure. Supporting this perspective, cultural practice is often argued to be patterned by individual social position, with cultural tastes, consumption, and lifestyles serving as significant markers of societal inequality (Peterson 1997; Warde et al. 2019). Early works challenged the notion of snobbish cultural consumption and promoted a new, more cosmopolitan or omnivorous form (Peterson & Kern 1996; van Eijck & Knulst 2005).

Since Bourdieu's seminal works have been applied beyond French and American society, numerous studies have explored the determinants of cultural consumption profiles among individuals, emphasizing his critical insight that societal inequality is deeply intertwined with cultural tastes and practices. Indicators related to class or status, such as education level and economic resources, consistently serve as strong explanatory factors for individual cultural consumption (Alderson et al. 2007; Lee & Chang 2008; Warde & Gayo-Cal 2009; Kim & Seo 2011; Lee & Lee 2014). Additionally, research has shown that cultural consumption patterns are also influenced by age (Vander Stichele & Laermans 2006; Lizardo & Skiles 2015; Glevarec et al. 2020) and gender (Bihagen & Katz-Gerro 2000; Lizardo, 2006; Christin 2012; Lagaert & Roose 2018), contributing to the depth and progress of these discussions. Overall, it appears that cultural omnivorousness is widely accepted as a form of status marker across the globe.

Drawing upon previous literature, extensive engagement in various cultural activities in public domains, such as attending art exhibitions, musical performances, and sports events, is assumed to constitute a legitimate manifestation of cultural capital linked to a relatively privileged social status. While the status of cultural capital as a signal of social prestige remains un-

changed, the ways in which cultural privilege is manifested have shifted (Coulangeon & Lemel 2007; Atkinson 2011). Existing research supports Bourdieu's crucial viewpoint on the link between cultural capital and social hierarchy but also reveals changing patterns of cultural stratification in contemporary societies. In short, the rise of the cultural omnivore in different countries can be regarded as a provisional endpoint in the literature of cultural stratification (Roose & Daenekindt 2015).

## *2. Covid-19 pandemic shock and cultural shifts*

Although omnivorous cultural consumption as a form of cultural capital or status-based signal has been observed in various societies, the specific relationship between cultural omnivorousness and societal change has garnered limited attention, aside from a few studies (Fishman & Lizardo 2013; Rossman & Peterson 2015). The pandemic era presents a unique quasi-experimental opportunity to examine the dynamics of cultural capital within the specific historical and societal context. It represents an unprecedented event that shifted individuals' focus from cultural and artistic pursuits to managing health risks. This external shock at both the national and global levels raise the question of how the pandemic and its subsequent social restrictions, which limited physical contact, have altered individual cultural practices.

For scholars interested in cultural stratification, there is a compelling reason to investigate whether the pandemic altered conventional patterns of cultural consumption, offering an opportunity to reveal the dynamic nature of cultural capital. Theoretically, cultural capital as a status marker or element of elite cultural life is assumed to be relatively stable and inflexible because it is a product of lifelong socialization. However, the pandemic has triggered rapid changes in cultural consumption and adaptations, both within the home and in public spaces. This unpredictable and atypical societal condition has

inevitably impacted how people structure their cultural practices and lifestyles. The contents of cultural capital are fundamentally subject to societal and historical changes (Peterson 1997). It is worth noting that the concept of cultural capital is inherently dynamic and flexible, yet it is often overlooked in relevant literature (Prieur & Savage 2013). For Bourdieu, social practice is consistently shaped by societal contexts without adhering to normative principles or cognitive intentions (Williams 1995: 581-582). Social practice is closely connected to individuals' realities and concrete experiences within specific social conditions (Jenkins 1992).

On one hand, global government-imposed restrictions are expected to have impeded both the consumption and production of cultural products. Lockdowns and stringent social distancing measures prevented people from participating in various cultural events, disproportionately affecting highbrow genres due to their smaller consumer and provider base compared to popular culture genres (Biondo et al. 2022). This differentiation between highbrow and lowbrow/popular culture genres is based on their complexity and symbolic value, which demand varying levels of cognitive engagement from audiences (Alderson et al. 2007), as well as their roles in social interactions (DiMaggio 1987; Lizardo 2006a). Even after the pandemic subsides, cultural fields that have been severely impacted may require more time to recover to pre-pandemic levels.

On the other hand, the pandemic crisis imposed not only physical restrictions but also societal constraints that may have diminished cultural diversity. It has impacted not only individuals' perceptions of their own health risks but also their trust, beliefs, norms, and macroeconomic expectations (Brück et al. 2020; Fetzner et al. 2020; Li et al. 2021; Seo 2023). These societal shifts have impacted individual cultural preferences and lifestyles. The pandemic created unique psychological circumstances for cultural activities in public spaces. Researchers argue that cultural tastes

reflect social standing and convey value orientations (DiMaggio 1996), with cultural omnivorousness linked to traits such as trust, risk-taking, and tolerance for outgroups (Chan 2019; Cho & Kim 2023). As a result, the pandemic could undermine culturally omnivorous lifestyles not only through indiscriminate restrictions on daily behaviors but also by fostering a social environment where individuals adapt and modify their cultural practices within their social contexts, either unconsciously or deliberately.

These studies suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic may have adversely affected omnivorous cultural consumption, particularly by disrupting cultural production and creating a psychologically stressful environment that restrained private leisure time. However, direct evidence on how external shocks, such as the pandemic, trigger cultural shifts remains scarce and inconsistent. For example, in England, there is no substantial evidence of a shift in cultural participation patterns during the pandemic (Feder et al. 2023). Conversely, in Denmark, individuals with higher education and income were found to engage less in physical cultural activities during the pandemic (Blaabæk & Jæger 2023). In Mexico, the influence of educational level on activities like attending the theater and going to the movies consistently decreased from 2018 to 2020 (Reyes-Martínez & Andrade-Guzmán 2023). These observations underscore the complex and varied impacts of the pandemic on cultural consumption across different contexts.

More insight is needed into how the recent pandemic has affected individual cultural preferences and consumption patterns. Has the pandemic shifted cultural consumption involving public attendance, such as visiting museums, attending theaters, or going to movies? Are these impacts significant enough to motivate individuals to alter their original lifestyles? While it is apparent that cultural activities were directly affected by Covid-19 preventive measures, including restrictions on social gatherings and temporary closures of cultural facilities, empirical evidence on such cultural shifts is still lacking.



Furthermore, it is crucial to demonstrate who is more likely to adapt their culturally omnivorous consumption patterns. Although the pandemic's circumstances have universally led people to reduce their involvement in various forms of performing and visual arts, there may be variations in how different social groups select alternative cultural repertoires. If those who were more omnivorous in their cultural consumption and had more resources to appreciate diverse cultural products are observed to be engaging less in cultural activities than before, it would indicate a significant shift in the status of omnivorous cultural consumption.

To address the unexplored research question within existing literature, I analyze survey data collected in September 2019 and from September to November 2022 in Seoul, the largest city in South Korea. This case study offers two notable advantages: First, East Asian countries, including South Korea, have been largely overlooked in research on cultural consumption patterns (Karademir Hazır & Warde 2018). While the Covid-19 pandemic may have disrupted individual cultural consumption patterns, the strength of the link between these patterns and societal hierarchy could vary with historical context. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, developed in the context of France, does not directly apply to South Korea, which has a distinct historical, political, and societal context shaping its own class hierarchy (Kwon & Park 2017). Unlike the relatively stable class/status structure in France, South Korea experienced significant social mobility during its modernization process (Chang 2001; Lee 2017). In this historical context, diverse cultural tastes engaged in symbolic competition rather than forming established and legitimized lifestyles (Yang 2005). Consequently, the connection between cultural taste and class in South Korea may not be as pronounced as Bourdieu observed in French society. The Covid-19 pandemic might have prompted individuals across different social strata to explore alternative cultural choices, moving away from traditional forms such as attending

public cultural events.

Second, South Korea serves as an exemplary case for investigating the cultural shifts brought about by the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially one of the countries most affected by the outbreak, South Korea's effective early response successfully curbed the number of infections (Her 2020). However, Covid-19 screening and social distancing measures disproportionately emphasized the ideal of 'law-abiding citizens' (Seo 2023). This emphasis, driven by the early success of containment efforts, prioritized mutual trust between the government and citizens, leading to the neglect of cultural and artistic activities, which were viewed as personal preferences rather than collective priorities, especially in the early stages of the pandemic. As the pandemic progressed, the Korean government's strategy became less effective, resulting in public exhaustion and resistance (Hong & Lim 2023). Given this context, it is reasonable to infer that individuals who had curtailed their cultural activities may resume their original practices as their perceptions of health risks improve.

The time coverage of the two datasets spans the period before the pandemic and the subsequent phase of endemicity. Officially, the World Health Organization declared the global Covid-19 health emergency over in March 2023. In South Korea, despite challenges in early 2022 due to a surge in new Covid-19 cases, the government's strategic vaccination plan successfully achieved approximately 80% coverage of the population by November 2021 (Kwon & Oh 2022). Authorities continuously maintained and adjusted quarantine rules with the aim of a phased recovery throughout 2022. However, by the second half of 2022, many citizens exhibited fatigue and resistance to stringent and often ineffective social distancing measures (Hong & Lim 2023). This dissonance between the government and the public led to distrust and non-compliance with policies, undermining South Korea's initial success in the early stages of the pandemic. In the latter part of the year,

multiuse facilities resumed operations, and postponed social gatherings and cultural events were reinstated, allowing individuals to gradually regain access to public spaces such as cafeterias, libraries, museums, and concert halls. By November 2022, the foundational conditions for engaging in cultural and artistic activities in public spaces were reestablished. This temporal coverage facilitates an understanding of the pandemic's influence on cultural participation in the post-pandemic period, helping to differentiate between reduced cultural engagement due to external constraints and changes in individual choices.

### *3. Study aim*

The main objective of this study is twofold. First, it seeks to demonstrate what extent the Covid-19 pandemic diminish the breadth of cultural consumption. As encapsulated in the literature review, the status of cultural omnivores is rarely challenged since its' emergence. Grounded in the literature concerning cultural stratification (Bourdieu 1986; Peterson 1992; 1997), diverse or omnivorous cultural consumption is considered as a notable status marker and a widely recognized form of cultural capital. However, in recent years, widespread public health measures, such as movement control orders, restrictions on social gatherings, and the cancellation of cultural events, have indiscriminately limited ordinary cultural participation across various fields and countries to control the spread of infectious diseases. The ramification of these coercive situations, both in physically and psychologically, individuals are poised to undergo substantial modifications in their cultural practices during this period. The first goal of this study is to provide empirical evidence on the pandemic's impact on omnivorous cultural consumption, highlighting the unstable nature of cultural consumption often assumed or theorized in previous research. To elucidate the exact impact of pandemic on

cultural consumption, coarsened exact matching procedure is applied to the analyzed data. Subsequently, multilevel models are employed to account for individual and regional covariates.

Next, this study examines whether the impact of pandemic on cultural participation remain consistent or diverge across the population. This second question is pertained to the details of changing patterns of cultural consumption after Covid-19 pandemic. The variation in cultural choices also be influenced by factors such as age, gender, educational level, economic affluence, and other contextual elements. More specifically, this study focuses on examining whether educational level and economic resources consistently predict engagement in diverse cultural and leisure activities. These factors create the necessary conditions to participate in activities that require an ability to appreciate abstract and symbolic meanings as well as financial capacity. Theoretically, cultural practices follow the logic of practice (Bourdieu 1990), which depends not only on societal structures that distribute different types of capital unequally across the population but also on historical and societal changes. People consistently organize their behaviors somewhat unconsciously, rooted in their historical backdrops and lifetime experiences.

During the pandemic, the Korean government enforced robust lockdown measures and prohibited social gatherings to curb the virus's spread, applying these restrictions uniformly across the population. Consequently, individuals, regardless of their level of cultural omnivorousness, had to adjust their previous cultural lifestyles. Furthermore, it is posited that the relatively unpredictable valuation of broad cultural participation in Korea, compared to Western societies, may lead to more volatile patterns of cultural consumption. If individuals who are more educated and affluent might be more inclined to modify or even abandon their omnivorous cultural consumption, even after significant easing of lockdown measures, that can be interpreted as a sign of decline in the status of omnivorous cultural consumption. These group have

more capacity and motivation to consistently refine their lifestyle than other groups within society. Their deviation from original cultural practices can be the important evidence for the consistently shifting cultural capital. To explore the differentiation in the negative impact of Covid-19 on cultural consumption across different social groups, interaction terms between the treatment variable, i.e., the pandemic, and various factors influencing cultural consumption are estimated. The statistical significance of these terms will provide evidence supporting the presence of any noticeable moderation in the central association.

### **III. Methodology**

#### *1. Data*

The data used in this study are sourced from two cross-sectional waves of Seoul Survey which is conducted among residents aged over 15 years old in Seoul. The dataset is hierarchically nested at the regional level, as the respondents are asked to specify their residential district from among the 25 districts in Seoul. The Seoul Institute (<http://global.si.re.kr/>), a public think tank founded by the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG), conducted this annual survey. The survey aims to track changes in various aspects of life among Seoul citizens, including economic life/work, health/security, environment, cultural/leisure, education/caring, values/attitudes, and more. To explore the impact of Covid-19, two waves are combined to encompass the period just before the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2019 and the period following the commencement of national vaccination and the normalization of public facilities, including libraries, museums, and concert halls, in 2022. Each year is repre-

sented by a single dichotomous variable. The survey for the year 2019 was conducted in September through face-to-face interviews, while after the outbreak of Covid-19, interviews were conducted from September to October in 2022. The 2019 dataset includes responses from 43,737 participants, and the 2022 dataset comprises 39,340 respondents.

## 2. Measure

**Cultural Consumption:** The dependent variable in this study is the breadth of cultural consumption, quantified as the breadth of cultural activities in which respondents participated in the last year (Peterson 2005). The survey presented respondents with eight categories of cultural activities: (1) exhibitions (art, photo, architectural, design), (2) museums/galleries, (3) musical or dance performances (classic, opera, ballet, etc.), (4) traditional Korean (folk or musical) shows, (5) theater productions, (6) movies, (7) concerts and other stage performances, and (8) professional sporting events. The original question regarding cultural participation sought information on the frequency of engagement in each activity per year. To create the dependent variable, these responses were transformed into binary variables, that is, a value of 1 indicates that the respondent participated in the activity, while a value of 0 indicates non-participation. Finally, the values of eight variables are summed up to indicate a more omnivorous or diverse cultural consumption among individuals.

**Covid-19:** The primary predictor is a dichotomous variable indicating the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. A value of 0 is assigned to respondents not exposed to the treatment, meaning those interviewed before the Covid-19 outbreak (in September 2019). Conversely, a value of 1 is assigned to respondents interviewed after the outbreak (from September to October 2022).

This variable is used as ‘treatment’ in the matching process.

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics**

Variable	Mean/proportion	SD	Min.	Max.
(Individual level; N=83,077)				
<i>Covid-19 (Year=2021)</i>	0.47	0.50	0	1
<i>Cultural consumption</i>	1.11	1.17	1	7
<i>Age</i>	4.41	1.67	1	7
<i>Female</i>	0.52	0.50	0	1
<i>Married</i>	0.68	0.47	0	1
<i>Education</i>	4.75	1.16	1	7
<i>Household income</i>	10.28	4.08	1	19
<i>Occupational status</i>				
<i>Professional/Managerial</i>	0.07	0.26	0	1
<i>Non-professional/managerial</i>	0.57	0.50	0	1
<i>Others/unemployed*</i>	0.36	0.48	0	1
<i>Employed</i>	0.42	0.49	0	1
<i>Residency(Z)</i>	0	1	-2.23	4.31
(Regional level; N=50)				
<i>L2_Education</i>	4.74	0.26	4.01	5.23
<i>L2_Household income</i>	10.21	0.89	7.98	12.56

Note. \* Reference group.

**Covariates:** To precisely estimate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on cultural consumption among respondents, several covariates are included in the analysis. These include age (coded as 1=15-19, 2=20s, 3=30s, ... , 7=70s or older), gender (1=Female, 0=Male), and marital status (1=married, 0=others, including single, divorced, widowed, etc.). Additionally, education is categorized as follows: 1=below elementary school, 2=elementary school, 3=middle

school, 4=high school, 5=college, 6=university, and 7=graduate school. Household income is divided into 19 categories, ranging from 1=below 500,000 won to 19=9,000,000 won or more. Occupation status is measured with three binary variables: professional/managerial job, non-professional /managerial job, and others (including unemployed, homemaker, and student), with the latter serving as the reference group. Employment status is coded as 1 for respondents employed in permanent positions, while all other types of employment and unemployment are coded as 0. Residency is measured by the number of months the respondent has been living in Seoul, standardized for analysis. Furthermore, two regional-level variables are controlled, incorporating the averages of individual educational levels and household income within each district.

### 3. *Analytic strategy*

In line with several studies examining the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic by comparing data from pre- and post-pandemic periods (Lehmann 2023; Kim 2023; Kurpiel 2023), this study employs the coarsened exact matching method (Iacus et al. 2012) using Stata 13 (StataCorp 2013). To accurately gauge the impact of the pandemic on individual cultural repertoires, it is essential to categorize survey respondents based on the timing of the event (in this case, the pandemic), distinguishing between a treatment group (interviewed after the event) and a control group (interviewed before the event). This research design relies on two crucial assumptions: excludability and ignorability (Muñoz et al. 2019). Excludability asserts that any divergence in outcomes between the two groups should solely result from the event itself. Ignorability, the second assumption, posits that survey assignment should be unrelated to potential outcomes.



In this analysis, the coarsened exact matching method is performed to mitigate the confounding effects of imbalanced pre-treatment variables such as age, gender, education, household income, marital status, occupation, employment, and residency. The formal expression of the analytic strategy is presented as follows:

$$Y_{ij} = \alpha_j + T_{ij}\delta_j + X_{ij}\beta_j + \epsilon_{ij} \quad (1)$$

Using subscripts  $i$  and  $j$  to denote respondents and regions, respectively, the equation above represents the outcome  $Y$  as a function of treatment  $T$ . The coefficient  $\delta_j$  signifies the conditional difference in means between the treatment and control groups, accounting for a set of individual and regional confounders  $X$ . To estimate differential treatment effects, four multiplicative terms (i.e.,  $T_{ij} \times \text{age}$ ,  $T_{ij} \times \text{gender}$ ,  $T_{ij} \times \text{education}$ ,  $T_{ij} \times \text{household income}$ ) are separately incorporated into Equation (1).

Following the application of coarsened exact matching to the original data, the analytic sample comprises 65,437 individuals (34,476 for 2019 data; 30,961 for 2022 data). Then, multilevel modeling is carried out using HLM 8.2 (Raudenbush & Congdon 2019). The data are weighted using weights provided by coarsened exact matching. All variables are grand mean centered (Enders & Tofighi 2007). The results from both unmatched and matched data will be presented, showcasing the effect of Covid-19 on the breadth of cultural consumption with the adjustment of regional-level controls. Additionally, this study will investigate whether and how the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic varies across several subgroups, considering factors such as educational attainment, household income, age, and gender-variables often used to measure social class or status in previous studies.

## IV. Results

### 1. *The impact of Covid-19 on individual cultural consumption*

The primary finding, assessing the impact of Covid-19 on individual cultural consumption, is summarized in Figure 1 and further elaborated upon in Table 2, providing more detailed information. In both the figure and the table, Model 1 (M1) represents an unadjusted model that excludes other covariates. Model 2 (M2) is an adjusted model that controls for the influence of both individual-level and regional-level covariates. The final model (M3) replicates Model 2 using the data applied weights which coarsened exact matching procedure provides. While the magnitude of this impact decreases as the model incorporates more covariates with the whole data (coefficient =  $-.692$ ,  $p < .001$  in Model 1; coefficient =  $-.638$ ,  $p < .001$  in Model 2), the final model shows the adjusted coefficient of Covid-19 on the cultural consumption outcome (coefficient =  $-.663$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As depicted in Figure 1, the statistical significance of the adverse impact of Covid-19 on the diversity of cultural consumption is evident, indicating persistent repercussions into the post-pandemic period. This result suggests the presence of an independent and strongly negative trend in broad cultural consumption patterns between the pre- and post-pandemic periods. As the regression coefficient for the treatment variable is approximately  $-0.66$ , it indicates that, on average, the breadth of cultural consumption (dependent variable) is expected to decrease by 0.66 units when the treatment is applied. It indicates that more than 6 out of 10 individuals are refraining from one cultural activity in their repertoires that they would have otherwise enjoyed before the pandemic.

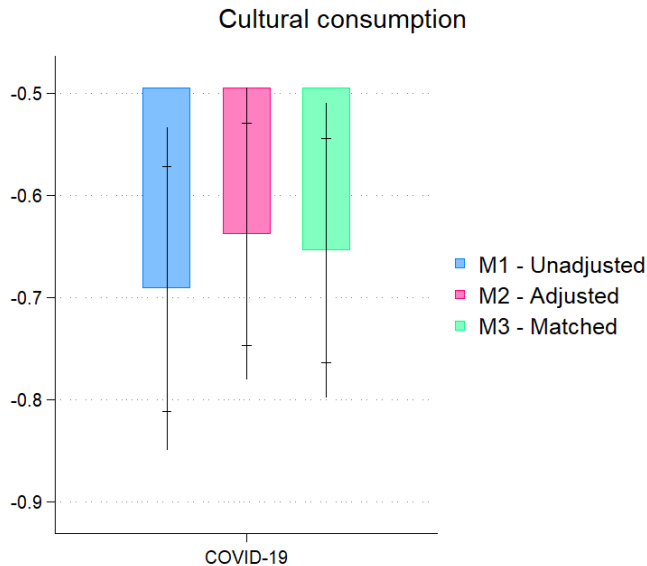
**Table 2. Estimates from multilevel models predicting cultural consumption (Seoul Survey, 2019; 2022)**

	M1 (Unadjusted)		M2 (Adjusted)		M3 (Matched)	
	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)
(Intercept)	1.097***	(0.031)	1.103***	(0.028)	1.132***	(0.029)
<i>Covid-19</i>	<b>-0.692***</b>	<b>(0.061)</b>	<b>-0.638***</b>	<b>(0.055)</b>	<b>-0.663***</b>	<b>(0.056)</b>
<i>Age</i>			-0.135***	(0.011)	-0.135***	(0.013)
<i>Female</i>			0.148***	(0.014)	0.151***	(0.045)
<i>Married</i>			0.040 <sup>#</sup>	(0.023)	0.042	(0.027)
<i>Ref.: Others/unemployed</i>						
<i>Professional</i>			0.071 <sup>#</sup>	(0.041)	0.03	(0.044)
<i>Non-professional</i>			-0.087***	(0.023)	-0.08***	(0.024)
<i>Employed</i>			0.105***	(0.018)	0.116***	(0.021)
<i>Residency(Z)</i>			-0.051***	(0.015)	-0.045*	(0.018)
<i>Education</i>			0.126***	(0.01)	0.133***	(0.011)
<i>Household income</i>			0.026***	(0.003)	0.025***	(0.003)
(Regional level)						
<i>L2_education</i>			0.003	(0.208)	0.002	(0.21)
<i>L2_Hincome</i>			0.001	(0.048)	-0.002	(0.05)
Random effects						
<i>var (L1)</i>	1.216		1.049		1.039	
<i>var (L2)</i>	0.048		0.041		0.039	
<i>ICC</i>	0.038		0.038		0.036	
<i>N (L1/L2)</i>	83,077/50		83,077/50		65,437/50	

Note. <sup>#</sup> $p < .1$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

In addition, as provided in the last model (see Table 2), diverse cultural consumption repertoires are more pronounced among certain demographic groups. Younger individuals exhibit a higher likelihood of diverse cultural

consumption (coefficient =  $-.135$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as do females (coefficient =  $.151$ ,  $p < .001$ ), regular workers (coefficient =  $.116$ ,  $p < .001$ ), those with higher education levels (coefficient =  $.133$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and relatively higher income earners (coefficient =  $.025$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Individuals in non-professional jobs are less likely to participate in cultural activities (coefficient =  $-.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ), possibly due to their less flexible working hours, resulting in limited leisure time. Residents with a longer tenure in the city are less inclined to engage in various cultural activities (coefficient =  $-.045$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, variables such as marital status, professional/managerial job roles, average educational attainment and household income within the district do not significantly impact individual cultural choices.



<Figure 1> The effect of COVID-19 on cultural consumption.

## 2. Determinants of cultural consumption: 2019 vs. 2022

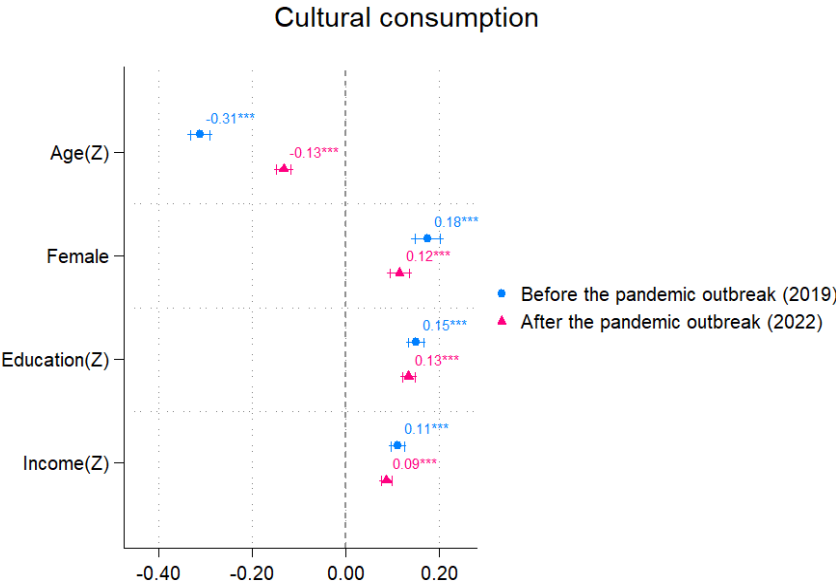
The findings indicate that the exogenous factor, the Covid-19 pandemic,

influences the connections between various determinants and individual cultural choices. To explore these further, multilevel models are applied separately to each dataset. All variables, except binary ones, are standardized to facilitate the comparison of coefficients within each model. Figure 2 presents the main result, excluding other confounding factors considered in the analysis, while detailed estimates are available in Table 3.

**Table 3. Estimates from multilevel models predicting cultural consumption before and after COVID-19 pandemic outbreak**

Data	Pre-pandemic (2019) M1		Post-pandemic (2022) M2	
	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)
(Intercept)	1.466***	(0.042)	0.752***	(0.035)
<i>Age(Z)</i>	-0.313***	(0.025)	-0.131***	(0.022)
<i>Female</i>	0.175***	(0.018)	0.116***	(0.017)
<i>Married</i>	0.123***	(0.038)	-0.053 <sup>#</sup>	(0.028)
<i>Ref.: Others/unemployed</i>				
<i>Professional</i>	0.056	(0.067)	-0.019	(0.049)
<i>Non-professional</i>	-0.089*	(0.044)	-0.088***	(0.02)
<i>Employed</i>	0.106**	(0.035)	0.132***	(0.018)
<i>Residency(Z)</i>	-0.001	(0.021)	-0.089***	(0.025)
<i>Education (Z)</i>	0.150***	(0.017)	0.133***	(0.016)
<i>Household income (Z)</i>	0.111***	(0.017)	0.086***	(0.016)
(Regional level)				
<i>L2_education (Z)</i>	0.046	(0.067)	-0.046	(0.076)
<i>L2_Hincome (Z)</i>	-0.028	(0.067)	0.037	(0.055)
Random effects				
<i>var (L1)</i>	1.345		0.704	
<i>var (L2)</i>	0.050		0.034	
<i>ICC</i>	0.036		0.046	
<i>N (L1/L2)</i>	34,476/25		30,961/25	

Note. <sup>#</sup> $p < .1$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 2. Determinants of cultural consumption (2019 vs. 2022)**

The findings imply that age, inter alia, significantly influences both pre- and post-pandemic scenarios. Moreover, its significance decreases after the pandemic, with the relative impact of age aligning more closely with that of gender or education. All key determinants of cultural consumption all exhibit a decrease following the outbreak of the pandemic. It is proposed that cultural stratification, influenced by various factors, is weakened and moderated.

*3. The differential impact of Covid-19 on cultural consumption*

While it is established that the Covid-19 pandemic has had an independent and significant detrimental impact on diverse cultural consumption, it remains unclear whether this impact is uniform or varies among different subgroups within the population. The exploratory analysis indicates an overall reduction

in key determinants of omnivorous cultural participation; however, it is uncertain if this negative change is significantly attributable to the pandemic. Therefore, interaction effects between the treatment variable (Covid-19) and other control variables are estimated using matched data, with the results presented in Table 4.

Firstly, the relationship between the pandemic and the breadth of cultural consumption reduces among individuals with higher education (coefficient =  $-0.083$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and relatively higher income (coefficient =  $-0.021$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This observation is significant as it suggests that the influence of education and household income—both pivotal in delineating an individual's social position in the class structure or social space (Bourdieu 1984)—on cultural lifestyle has weakened during the pandemic period.

The modified pattern of cultural consumption among individuals persists even after the near conclusion of the pandemic. Despite the sustained significant impact of education and household income on diverse cultural choices, the magnitude of their influence has somewhat waned. Not all individuals reduced their participation in public cultural events to the same degree. Instead, those with higher levels of education (Figure 3) and greater economic resources tended to shun cultural consumption more than their counterparts (Figure 4).

In addition, analyzing the impact of Covid-19 across different age groups reveals a significant differentiation (coefficient =  $0.066$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Figure 5). This result indicates that younger generations are notably more affected by Covid-19 in terms of their cultural lives. However, the influence of the pandemic does not exhibit divergence based on gender. Females demonstrate greater engagement in various cultural activities than males, both in the pre- and post-pandemic periods.

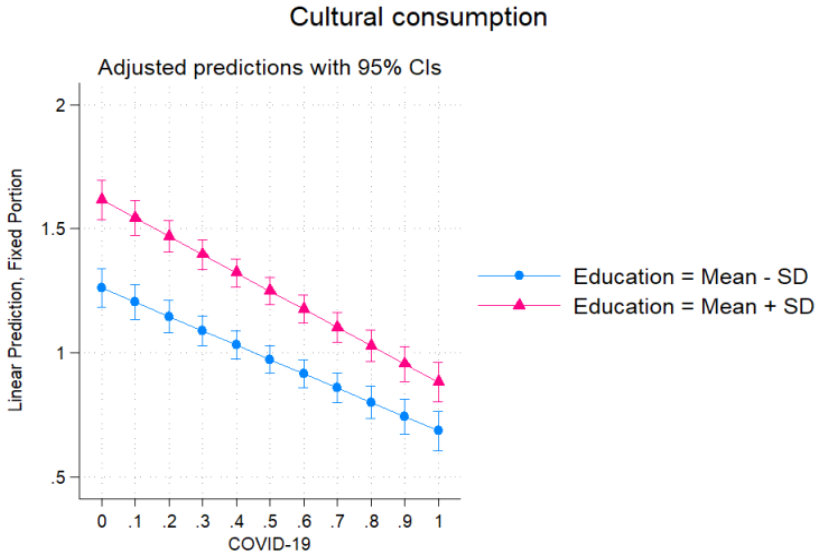


Figure 3. The interaction effect between COVID-19 and education on cultural consumption

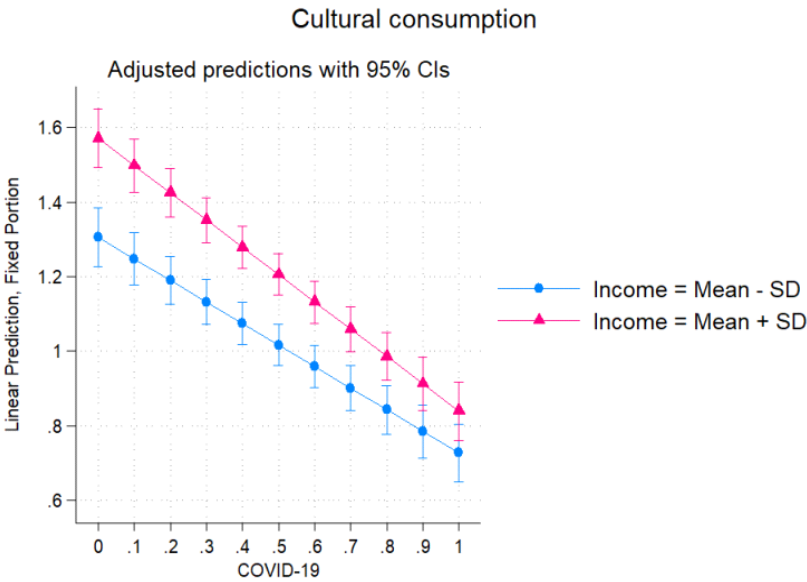
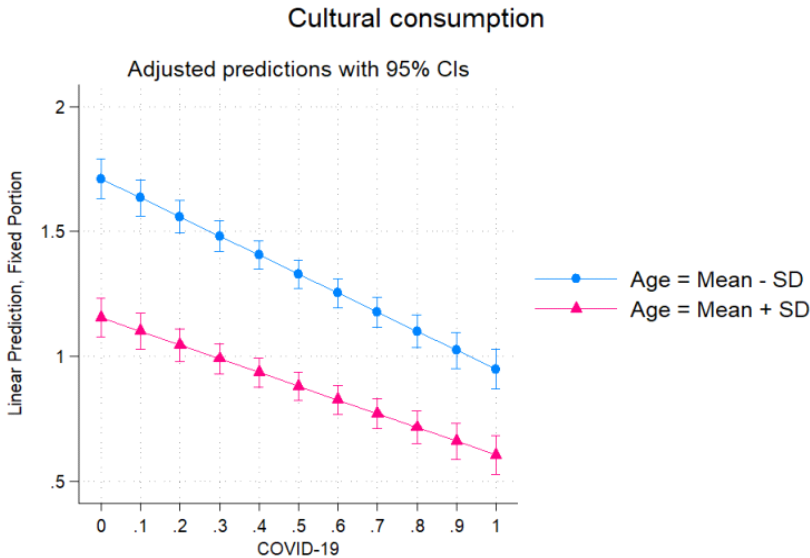


Figure 4. The interaction effect between COVID-19 and income on cultural consumption.





**Figure 5. The interaction effect between COVID-19 and age on cultural consumption**

In the specific context of South Korea, omnivorous cultural consumption appears to be flexible and adaptive rather than sticky and stable. Especially during the unprecedented global pandemic crisis, cultural consumers—particularly those who are relatively younger, more educated, and economically affluent—swiftly adapt and adjust their cultural preferences, excluding offline public participation in diverse cultural events. These transitions appear to be irreversible. However, gender differences, indicating that women maintain a higher and stable propensity for cultural engagement than men, remain rather consistent.

In conclusion, the Covid-19 pandemic has unexpectedly but significantly equalized the impact of key predictors on diverse cultural consumption among citizens. Pre-pandemic, variations in cultural consumption were primarily based on age, education, and household income, with the younger, highly educated, and economically privileged exhibiting greater engagement in cultural activities compared to their counterparts. Post-pandemic, while the stratification in cultural consumption persists in terms of direction, the degree of disparity among different subgroups has significantly reduced.

**Table 4. Within-region interaction estimates from multilevel models predicting cultural consumption (Seoul Survey 2019; 2022)**

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)
(Intercept)	1.137***	(0.029)	1.132***	(0.029)	1.134***	(0.029)	1.133***	(0.029)
<i>Covid-19</i>	-0.955***	(0.086)	-0.645***	(0.058)	-0.270*	(0.112)	-0.451***	(0.063)
<i>Age</i>	-0.166***	(0.013)	-0.135***	(0.013)	-0.135***	(0.013)	-0.135***	(0.013)
<i>Female</i>	0.152***	(0.015)	0.167***	(0.021)	0.152***	(0.015)	0.151***	(0.015)
<i>Education</i>	0.133***	(0.011)	0.133***	(0.011)	0.172***	(0.016)	0.133***	(0.011)
<i>Household income</i>	0.024***	(0.003)	0.025***	(0.003)	0.024***	(0.003)	0.034***	(0.004)
<b>Covid-19</b>								
<i>xAge</i>	<b>0.066***</b>	<b>(0.014)</b>						
<i>xFemale</i>			<b>-0.034</b>	<b>(0.027)</b>				
<i>xEducation</i>					<b>-0.083***</b>	<b>(0.021)</b>		
<i>xHousehold income</i>							<b>-0.021***</b>	<b>(0.005)</b>
<b>Random effects</b>								
<i>var (L1)</i>		1.037		1.039		1.037		1.038
<i>var (L2)</i>		0.039		0.039		0.039		0.039
<i>ICC</i>		0.036		0.036		0.036		0.036
<i>N (L1/L2)</i>		65,437/50		65,437/50		65,437/50		65,437/50

Note. # $p < .1$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

All models include covariates at both individual (L1) and regional (L2) level. Covariates at the individual level include marital status, occupational status, employment, and residency (Z). L2 covariates include average of education and household income among the residents within the district.

#### 4. *Robustness test*

The primary analysis explores the potential impact of household income on cultural consumption patterns for both primary income earners and other family members, regardless of their employment status. To bolster the findings, a subset is exclusively composed of employed respondents who generate their own income. Within this subset, household income is replaced by personal income, and occupational status variables are substituted to a set of dichotomous variables representing respondent employment statuses: permanent worker, temporary or casual worker, self-employed, and employer, while unpaid family worker serves as the reference category. The subset size is 53,368 (27,303 for 2019 data; 26,065 for 2022 data).

Multilevel models are employed for estimation within this subset, and the results are detailed in Table A in the Appendices. The overall findings in the main section remain consistent. The Covid-19 pandemic adversely affects the omnivorous cultural consumption of individuals with higher education (coefficient =  $-.068$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and greater personal income (coefficient =  $-.016$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Although the impact size and statistical significance marginally diminish in the subset, the underlying trend persists and remains within the conventional standard of statistical significance. The test confirms the robustness of the main outcomes. In addition, individuals of a relatively younger age are inclined to curtail the breadth of their cultural consumption post-pandemic era (coefficient =  $.058$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Female workers exhibit a propensity to avoid diverse cultural consumption (coefficient =  $-.067$ ,  $p < .05$ ), deviating from the observed pattern in the primary analysis.

## V. Discussion

The findings indicate a decline in omnivorous cultural consumption across the population after the pandemic crisis. Even after accounting for individual and regional covariates, the breadth of cultural consumption has diminished in the post-pandemic period. The timeframe selected for this study aptly captures the period when the direct hindrance of individual cultural consumption in public places transitioned to the gradual permission of private gatherings and the utilization of various public facilities. There has been a noticeable contraction in the manifestation of cultural omnivorousness, particularly evident in the decreased diversity of cultural engagement as the pandemic crisis approaches its conclusion. It appears that Korean cultural consumers, who might typically exhibit omnivorous tastes, were not engaging in revenge spending on cultural activities in 2022.

Moreover, the results underscore the differentiated impact of the pandemic on omnivorous cultural consumption, revealing the flexible nature of cultural capital. Two key indicators of individual socioeconomic status—education and household income—appear to have relatively diminished their predictive significance for diverse cultural consumption. This suggests a reduction in the disparity between more educated and affluent individuals and their counterparts. In the case of South Korea, residents in Seoul seem rapidly embraced a new lifestyle that penalizes conventional, omnivorous cultural participation repertoires within the context of a ‘new normal.’ Additional finding pertaining to the shrinking impact of age on omnivorous cultural consumption indicates potential shift in cultural consumption landscape, as younger generations are more likely to learn alternative cultural lifestyles

during the pandemic period than their older counterparts.

My findings contribute to expanding academic knowledge of Bourdieu's theoretical legacy by illustrating cultural consumption as cultural capital amidst rapid societal changes, specifically during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the post-pandemic period, culturally omnivorous consumption appears to have been particularly less attractive in Korean society, especially among those with higher education and income levels. Bourdieu (1984) introduced the concept of cultural capital to emphasize that cultural choices are influenced by social structures rather than solely personal and arbitrary preferences. Simultaneously, he argued that social practices are organized not by conscious intent but shaped by specific historical experiences within the social world. The results indicate a shift in the manifestation of cultural capital, where omnivorous cultural consumption changed during the pandemic. In Korean society, the impact of education and household income on diverse cultural consumption has diminished, indicating a blurring of the social gradient in cultural consumption patterns.

Plus, one might wonder why the decline in cultural capital due to reduced cultural consumption should be a matter of concern. This is because the reduction leads to a 'downward' leveling, where cultural participation uniformly diminishes across all segments, regardless of education or income, rather than promoting increased engagement. If leveling were indicative of increased cultural engagement, it could be hailed as democratization or equalization, signaling a reduction of cultural disparities rooted in societal inequalities. However, the outcomes are far from such optimistic prospects. This downward leveling is founded on the observation that individuals with greater advantages in terms of cultural or economic capital exhibit higher adaptability to shifts in cultural consumption during unstable periods. As evident from the visualizations of interaction effects, those who were not previously active in diverse cultural activities remain inactive. The closing gaps

is largely driven by those with the capacity to choose alternative cultural or leisure consumption.

Consequently, this leveling raises concerns, suggesting that conventional indicators of cultural and artistic activities may be losing their legitimacy in measuring cultural capital. The deepening cultural disparity becomes more concealed, residing in less visible realms throughout the pandemic crisis. Put differently, the pandemic appears superficially even minimize the gap in cultural participation, but it is a result of unequal distribution of capabilities and resources to alternative options. The pandemic seems to have exacerbated the existing cultural stratification linked to social inequality, further obscuring the uneven distribution of alternative options in terms of cultural consumption. While the Covid-19 pandemic has persisted for only a few years, it has proven to be a substantial duration, capable of reshaping the interconnections among various factors and cultural practices.

It is crucial to caution that the fading impact of education and household income on cultural consumption does not equate to the complete erosion of cultural capital during the pandemic. Put another way, this change does not necessarily attenuate the significance of omnivorousness as a form of cultural capital, provided that preferences can be consistently managed and acknowledged through diverse sources engaging with cultural products. Instead, a specific manifestation of cultural capital, namely diverse cultural consumption in public spheres, has experienced a notable weakening and may be subject to substitution. The evolving significance of cultural consumption as a facet of cultural capital may not be transient and could undergo a substantial transformation in the future, especially as younger generations, observed to be more susceptible to shifts in the cultural landscape during the pandemic, shape its trajectory. One of the prevalent expressions of status-based privilege, omnivorous cultural consumption, appears to be veering towards an ebbing form of cultural capital.

The contribution of this study lies in providing an empirical account within the East Asian context, an area often underrepresented in literature addressing cultural omnivores. It adds valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge by presenting a detailed analysis of the cultural stratification patterns in South Korea, addressing a notable gap in relevant literature. This study suggests delving into the potential impact of societal and historical contexts, extending beyond individual attributes, on shaping the correlation between individual socioeconomic positions and the expression of cultural capital, especially in the context of the pandemic. By adopting this approach, I aim to foster nuanced discussions and deepen our comprehension of the complex interplay between societal influences and cultural dynamics.

This study is subject to additional limitations as follows. Firstly, there is a constraint in the available data to comprehensively capture another crucial determinant of cultural tastes and consumption—specifically, the measurement of social capital among individuals. Secondly, the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic is somewhat attenuated when researchers focus on specific cultural tastes, such as musical preferences, or online cultural consumption as the primary measure of cultural capital. While this doesn't necessarily invalidate the study's contention, comparing the results with both measures would provide additional insights. Thirdly, due to the scope limitation, this study could not delve into the potential changes in the relationship between cultural omnivorousness or openness and social values or political tolerance. Fourthly, future studies should explore how the relationship between various types of cultural consumption patterns and their determinants has evolved, assessing whether cultural landscapes have become more leveled or democratized. For example, it is crucial to investigate whether the influence of education or household income on univores or cultural inactives has changed during or after the pandemic. Fifthly, regarding methodology, there is a risk of violating the assumption of excludability, which is essential for applying coarsened exact

matching, due to unobserved covariates. Future studies should address this by considering additional confounders to minimize such risks. Lastly, it is crucial to acknowledge that future research encompassing a wider time span may either challenge or refine these observations. A thorough investigation into this aspect extends beyond the scope of the current study, presenting a promising direction for future research. It can be argued that this study may impetuously assert the deterioration of cultural capital, which might be gradually recovering in accordance with a quadratic curve. It is advisable for future studies to explore whether the diminished trend in cultural capital is undergoing a transitional phase or not.

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## 팬데믹과 문화 변동: 옴니보어적 문화 소비에 대한 코로나19 팬데믹의 차별적 영향 조사

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이 연구는 문화 소비의 결정요인의 변화에 초점을 맞추어, 코로나19 팬데믹 전후의 문화 소비 패턴을 조사한다. 2019년과 2022년에 수집된 데이터에 Coarsened exact matching 기법을 적용한 후 다층 모형을 분석한 결과, 팬데믹 기간 이후 문화 소비 자체가 감소했을 뿐만 아니라 팬데믹 이전에 비해 문화 소비가 연령, 교육수준, 가구소득과 같은 요인과 덜 연관되는 것으로 나타난다. 이는 공공 장소에서의 다양한 문화 행사 참여로 측정되는 문화 자본의 중요성에 변화가 있음을 보여준다. 팬데믹 이후 옴니보어적 문화 소비의 예상치 못한 평준화는 주로 젊고, 교육수준이 높으며, 경제적으로 부유한 개인에 의해 주도된다. 그러나 이러한 추세는 문화 참여의 민주화를 보여주는 것이 아니라, 오히려 외부적 충격으로 인해 제한된 문화적 선택지를 조정하는 개인의 적응 능력상의 불평등이 작동하고 있음을 시사한다.

주제어: 문화 소비, 문화 참여, 문화 자본, COVID-19, coarsened exact matching

## Appendices

Table A. Robustness test using a subset of the employed group in the matched data

	M1		M2		M3		M4	
	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)	<i>Coef.</i>	(SE)
(Intercept)	1.147***	(0.028)	1.147***	(0.028)	1.147***	(0.028)	1.147***	(0.028)
<i>Covid-19</i>	-0.909***	(0.095)	-0.630***	(0.056)	-0.317*	(0.143)	-0.546***	(0.063)
<i>Age</i>	-0.194***	(0.017)	-0.164***	(0.012)	-0.166***	(0.012)	-0.165***	(0.012)
<i>Female</i>	0.206***	(0.020)	0.238***	(0.024)	0.206***	(0.020)	0.206***	(0.020)
<i>Education</i>	0.074**	(0.025)	0.129***	(0.014)	0.159***	(0.022)	0.129***	(0.014)
<i>Personal income</i>	0.025***	(0.005)	0.025***	(0.005)	0.025***	(0.005)	0.033***	(0.007)
<i>Married</i>	0.074**	(0.025)	0.071**	(0.025)	0.073**	(0.025)	0.071**	(0.025)
<i>Ref.: unpaid family worker</i>								
<i>Permanent</i>	0.105 <sup>#</sup>	(0.061)	0.102 <sup>#</sup>	(0.060)	0.108 <sup>#</sup>	(0.062)	0.105 <sup>#</sup>	(0.061)
<i>Temporary</i>	0.046	(0.053)	0.047	(0.053)	0.047	(0.053)	0.047	(0.053)
<i>Self-employed</i>	0.054	(0.062)	0.051	(0.061)	0.058	(0.063)	0.053	(0.062)
<i>Employer</i>	-0.059	(0.062)	-0.058	(0.061)	-0.055	(0.062)	-0.055	(0.062)
<i>Residency(Z)</i>	-0.052**	(0.017)	-0.051**	(0.017)	-0.051**	(0.017)	-0.051**	(0.017)
<i>Covid-19</i>								
<i>xAge</i>	<b>0.058**</b>	<b>(0.020)</b>						
<i>xFemale</i>			<b>-0.067*</b>	<b>(0.031)</b>				
<i>xEducation</i>					<b>-0.068*</b>	<b>(0.027)</b>		
<i>xPersonal income</i>							<b>-0.016*</b>	<b>(0.007)</b>

(Regional level)								
<i>L2_education</i>	-0.044	(0.215)	-0.048	(0.217)	-0.052	(0.216)	-0.052	(0.215)
<i>L2_Hincome</i>	0.022	(0.049)	0.022	(0.049)	0.024	(0.049)	0.024	(0.049)
Random effects								
<i>var (L1)</i>	1.047		1.049		1.048		1.048	
<i>var (L2)</i>	0.041		0.041		0.041		0.041	
<i>ICC</i>	0.038		0.038		0.038		0.038	
<i>N (L1/L2)</i>	53,368/50		53,368/50		53,368/50		53,368/50	

Note. # $p < .1$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .