

현대 한국 직업 환경 속에서 고학력 한국여성 인력의 활용에 대한 연구

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Have We Come a Long way in our Modern Korean Work Environment in the Utilisation of our Highly-Educated Korean Women?

Abstract

During the 1970s in North America, an American tobacco company attracted professional women to buy their product by using the slogan, 'You've come a long way, baby,' with the women in the advertisement portrayed as successful businesswomen, commonly dressed in masculine styled suits. This slogan, can it be used in reference to the highly educated female in Korea today? After identifying the principal research focus, this paper is structured as follows: (1) the background and objectives for this study will be introduced; (2) the intended contribution to knowledge will be discussed; (3) research questions will be proposed, and (4) the principal methods will be introduced and justified, referencing the pilot study and the intended subsequent study.

The main research instrument was a quantitative questionnaire pilot survey, conducted online through <http://www.surveymoney.com> during the month of May 2009, of 24 Korean and foreign firms in Korea, a non-probability sample.

I. Principal Research Focus

The focus of this research is to inves-

tigate the effect of culture on the Korean labour market to explain the nature, extent, and underlying causes of the under-utilisation of Korean women in Korean firms, many of whom are highly educated. This research will also analyse the exper-

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riences of the minority of women who have succeeded and progressed into senior management; it will attempt to develop best practices in hiring, pay and promotions based upon how these women, part of a small segment within the expanding highly educated female labour force, were able to succeed. This research seeks to explain why, through empirical evidence, despite increased education and skilling of women in Korea, and legislative reforms to redress gender imbalances, significant progress in the hiring, retention, and promotion of women, changes in organisational practice have yet to occur (Korean Women's Development Institute, 2008). Specifically, this research will focus on discovering and explaining the reasons for this asymmetry of the under-utilisation of **highly** educated Korean females in managerial positions

1. Background and Rationale for conducting this study

Economically, Korea, having grown rapidly, is one of the top 15 economies. It has an increasingly well educated female population. It aspires to be a world leader in the knowledge economy. Its women are shown to be highly educated, but

they are poorly represented in leadership and decision-making positions, and faced with limited opportunities once employed (Keum, 2003; Brinton and Cho, 2006; Brinton, 2001; Meng, 1998; Papanek, 1990; Kugelman, Moon, Renshaw, Park and Darcy, 2006; World Bank, Population Reference Bureau, 2007). Like is one of several countries in East Asia, it has experienced increases in women's labour force participation during a period of extremely rapid industrialisation. Its distinctiveness is the wage gap between men and women who are performing the same job with the same levels of education (Joo, 2008; Kim, *The Korea Times*, 2006; Brinton and Choi, 2006). Although recent research indicated better profitability for firms which employed women in higher level positions in Korea, their overall employment rate remains far below most other OECD countries (Joo, 2008; OECD, 2008; Pettman, 2003; Enloe, 1992; Beechey and Perkins, 1988). The intensity of sex-segregation is more severe in traditional societies such as Korea, and its effects can be seen in educational level, field of study, and occupational segregation (Pan, 1993; Chong, 2006; Song, 2006).

Furthermore, Korea's pattern of under-utilisation of women differs from

that of other developed countries:

The government states that it has a rapidly aging population, and is said to need skilled women workers to continue the growth of its economy. It has introduced, in the past two decades, legislative changes to promote gender equality (McKinsey, 2004; World Bank, Catalyst; 2004). Various types of discrimination, discriminatory treatment, or discriminatory practices against diverse groups of people exist, despite the Constitution and many labor laws banning discriminatory treatment (Ahn et al., 2007; The Korea Times, 2006). However, evidence from employment studies suggest that, in general, little progress in the hiring, retention, and promotion has been made, although this may vary from sector to sector and from firm to firm (e.g. traditional versus knowledge-based sectors; domestic versus foreign owned firms) (Joo, 2008; Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2008). The significant unmet challenge in leveraging the female labour force for the Korean government is said to be decreasing the burden of child care for women, in order to encourage them to participate in economic activities (Choi, 2008, McKinsey, 2004; Joo, 2008; Brinton and Choi, 2006; Kim, 2003; Choi,

Chung, and Kim, 2003; Park, 2002; Keum, 2002). Other major barriers to leveraging female talent are attributed to a gender-biased public mindset and culture across all stages of a male-dominated work culture (International Labour Office, 2003).

Further investigation of gender differences in the Korean workforce, is particularly warranted for three reasons: 1) Korea's size as an economic world power; 2) the rapid increase in literacy of the population; and 3) the cultural difference in East Asian countries (patriarchal society created a male dominated work environment). A key contradiction in the case of Korea is that women actually have advanced in terms of skills and education, but have not advanced co-measurably at the workplace; this is of significance as a) previous unequal access to education has been remedied, but b) this has not led to employment or equal employment for women. An unexpected recent trend is that the unemployment rate of recent Korean university graduate males is higher than recent university graduate females. This is not an encouraging trend, because it is attributed to Korean firms being able to pay females a significantly lower salary than males

(Korea Times, 2006, 2007). Therefore, the question of perceptions of the value of women's employment, and how patriarchal forces have influenced the attitudes to women's employment, especially in times of economic crisis is socially and academically germane. The problem of gender discrimination is said to be less significant in professional and technical groups and is posited as a path to resolving the issue but it is still prevalent in many other occupations (Joo, 2008; Walby et al., 2007). Therefore, researching this topic might be helpful in understanding if the professional and technical groups have become different from other sectors (if that difference is conclusively established).

This study can compare the Korean experience to other countries where women have gained increasing access to education, with or without the corresponding gains in terms of employment and career development. This research is timely because of the 2008-09 global financial crisis and its possible effect on job stability for Korean women. In the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, women were called explicitly upon to exit the work force to a greater extent than their male counterparts (Grubb, Lee,

and Tergist, 2007; Lee and Cho, 2005; 2000; Grabb et al., 2007; Brinton et al., 1995; Dore, 1976). This study will lay the groundwork for further examination. If, for example, Korea reverts back to its pattern of forcing women out of the job market now, then these women will not be available when needed in the long term, The question of whether if further intensification of the current crisis will under-utilise the highly educated women.

The second rationale for this study is that the researcher works in Korea in the higher education field and has a deep concern as a female lecturer in the future employability of her female students. By gaining an understanding of the mechanisms for this asymmetry of employment in Korea, this researcher's female students will benefit as they attempt to obtain employment after graduation or explore other rational choices.

II. Background and Objectives

1. Aim and Objectives

To address, through extensive literature review research and data from studies, gender discrimination in the Korean

workplace. This research will examine culturalist approaches (Lowe, 2002; Lowe, 1998; Wilkinson, 1996; Janelli, 1993; Westwood and Everett, 1987) and other theoretical approaches including feminist theories of women's employment (Walby et al., 2007; Walby, 2004, 1997; Blackburn et al., 2002; Crompton and Lyonette, 2002; Elder and Johnson, 1999; Standing, 1998, 1989; Robinson, 1998; Razavi, 1997; Collinson and Collinson, 1996; Elson, 1993; Pinch and Storey, 1992; Beechey and Perkins, 1988; Thompson, 1983; Zimbalist, 1979; Bruegel, 2005, 1979, 1978; Beechey, 1978, Bland et al., 1978, Connelly, 1978; Benston 1969; Adamson et al., 1976; Braverman, 1974; Benston, 1969; Becker, 1964). These theoretical approaches will also be used to inform survey design. Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) and other quantitative studies will be examined and modified. The modified instrument will be administered to test the explanatory power of various theories of workplace dynamics as they relate to gender inequality in the Korean employment context. The specific objectives are as follows: (1) To identify the current status and trends in hiring, promotion, and retention of Korean women (domestic and foreign-owned) firms, (2)

To define the barriers and facilitators of women's employment, considering individual, institutional, and societal factors, and (3) To be informed by, examine, and evaluate various theoretical approaches to women and work. The amendments to labour legislation, which can be viewed as being relatively progressive, are being unevenly complied with.

III. Contribution to Knowledge

There has been very limited quantitative academic research on gender discrimination available in Korea. Since 2006, little has been written in international journals, exceptions being studies by the following authors: Kugelman (ed.) (2006), Grubb, Lee and Tergeist (2007), Kim, Kim, Lee, and Choi (2007), Brinton and Choi (2006), and Kim and Voss (2007), in formulating an understanding of the links between the under-utilization of women and the wider nature of the Korean business system (Walby et al., 2007; Whitley, 1999). The researcher's focus on Korea's workforce will prove valuable as, firstly, it will: (a) shed more light on the under-utilisation of the highly

educated Korean female in the Korean workplace; and (b) examine potentially relevant theories, on women and work and their appropriateness to Korea, and to the under-utilisation of women in the workplace. The current literature paints a picture that indicates Korean culture is fixed in its organisational perception towards women (OECD, 2008; Joo, 2008; Kim et al., 2007; McKinsey, 2004; Bae and Rowley, 2004; Brinton and Choi, 1996; Chang and Chang, 1994). Women are still underrepresented, even though there has been a gradual increase in labour participation rates in the past decade possibly due to legislative changes and the effects of globalisation. However, assuming equality is the goal, this increase is said to be insufficient (World Bank, 2007, OECD, 2008). Gender discrimination is particularly widespread in Korea when compared to other Asian countries such as Hong Kong or China (Joo, 2008; Yu, 2003). There is a need for more work in understanding the nature of the Korean business system, particularly in the light of ongoing changes mentioned previously. As we have seen, women's issues do matter, e.g. the financial success of an organisation. That women are employed in jobs that are

precarious, paid on average 38 percent less than men performing the same job, or hired as a cheap reserve labour force, a crucial point in this research (Joo, 2008; OECD, 2008). What is the underlying cause for this process of uneven change and why does discrimination still persist, given the changes in educational attainment and legislation? This study will contribute to empirical knowledge in helping to understand the gap between existing skills and actual utilisation of labour, focusing on gender imbalances within a developed Asian economy (i.e. Korea). At a theoretical level, this study will contribute to knowledge as it will determine the relevance of various theories when applied to Korea.

1. Focus and Limits

The research will be confined to the modern sectors of Korean business society, such as information technology and the service sectors, rather than the traditional sectors, such as manufacturing, as the research focus is on highly educated women who seek employment within the modern sectors. The working hypothesis would expect these sectors of the knowledge economy that require highly skilled

and educated knowledge workers to also employ women in these roles. However, literature (Walby et al., 2007) shows that these sectors also under-utilise women and women's higher education participation in these areas is also lower than their proportion in the population of educated women. Furthermore, when women do work in these sectors, they work in low skilled service roles.

IV. Gender discrimination in Korea

An overwhelming majority of the literature, first on the Asian miracle and then on the 1997 Asian financial crisis, ignores women and gender relations (Pettman, 2003; Pan, 1993; Kim, 1984). A key factor limiting the progress of female workers may be linked to a critical need for greater representation of women in the Korean government since other countries, where this has occurred, made greater progress, for example, the Philippines. Despite the fact that gender-sensitive budgeting became incorporated within the gender mainstreaming plan, the level of female workers in government is marginal as the interest of society in

hiring female civil servants is a low priority issue (Kugelman et al., 2006; Kim, 2007). This issue is something to question and investigate and may possibly be an explanation for gender under-utilisation in Korea. However, both under-representation and under-utilisation could have some other common cause, i.e. increased political representation may not actually lead to increased utilisation (Kim, 2007; August and Tuten, 2003). In spite of the high percentage of women receiving higher education (post-secondary degrees) (36.8%) and attaining PhDs (23.8%), women do not have a proportionate share of teaching positions in institutions of higher learning; this may have an influence on career development in female graduates (KMOGEF, 2008). In 2008, 25.4% of Korean women 25 years of age or older were educated in colleges or higher education, but major imbalances in graduate employment between men and women persist (Joo, 2008). The most significant statistic from the perspective of this research topic is that, among the university-educated population, the gender gap in employment reaches 35 percent in Korea, over three times the OECD average; quantifiably, highly educated Korean women are underemployed, es-

pecially relative to their male counterparts (KWDI, 2008; Brinton and Choi, 2006).

Korean women's economic participation shows an "M-curve," which is characterized by the highest rates of employment for women in their 20's and 40's, but lowest during maximum childbearing years (Joo, 2008; Brinton and Choi, 2006; Kim, 2003; Choi, Chung, and Kim, 2003; Park, 2002; Keum, 2002). This "M-shaped" life cycle pattern of female labour force participation into the twenty-first century is only shared with Japan in East Asia. This can be attributed to the prevailing value system placing importance on family (i.e. child rearing) for women over employment, in contrast to the reverse U-curve of countries such as Canada and Sweden.

V. Relationship to Existing Literature

An extensive literature review (primary and secondary sources) has been conducted by the researcher, accessing books, journal articles, reports by research institutes, government reports, and newspaper articles. As to the under-represen-

tation of women in the Korean workplace, there is some research data, which investigates Korean professional women's opportunities for advancement and pay equality in traditionally male dominated Korean society. The research will consider whether the data suggests that the phenomenon of under-utilisation is best explained by culturalist theoretical perspectives or other theories.

The bulk of the literature that seeks to explain the distinct features of human resource management (HRM) in Korea focuses on cross-cultural influences and traditionalist resistance (Zhu et al., 2007; Lie, 2006; Bae and Rowley, 2004; Rhee and Chang, 2002, Rhee and Chang, 2002; Puck and Lim, 2002; Rowley 2001; Chung et al., 1997; Chang and Chang, 1994; Hamilton and Biggart, 1988). This research will focus on the relevance of these cross-cultural accounts to explain persistent gender inequality. It will be investigated to ascertain if the under-representation of women in contemporary Korean work organizations may be due to barriers in climbing the career ladder; this will be achieved by the researcher conducting a survey to investigate attitudes and practices within work organizations. Cultural accounts classify soci-

eties, including Korea, (e.g. Hofstede, 1981), where the role of women in particular is discussed. They are the most common theoretical paradigms currently employed to study Korean HRM where specific dimensions of culture, such as Confucianism, are highlighted. This fits in with broader cultural theories regarding the influence of a patriarchal society on women and their role in the workplace. The predictions of cultural theory, that a certain type of culture will result in a specific status for women, will be contrasted with empirical evidence to see if it explains women's confinement to subordinate roles in the workplace. However, women's increased educational attainment would suggest that there is some process of change at work, which critics of cultural approaches say culturalists fail to account for.

Based on the findings, the relevance of alternative approaches to understanding diversity in HR practice, i.e., firms are following traditional and/or western practices will be investigated. Based upon propositions it attributes to, such as a paternalistic ideology to Korean firms, cultural theories may be particularly relevant to understanding the evolving Korean context. After administering the larger

study, research questions focusing on the quantitatively measured experience of women in global firms versus Korean firms may test effectively the power of culturalist theories.

1. Various Theoretical Approaches

1.1 Culturalist perspectives and Korea

Culturalist perspectives focus on embedded forms of national and regional culture. Culture is likely to have persistent effects on firm level behaviour; they include phenomena that are not easily dispensed with or amended (Lowe, 2002; Lowe, 1998; Wilkinson, 1996; Janelli, 1993; Westwood and Everett, 1987).

In reviewing the effect of culture on Korea and its gender workplace dynamics, culturalists first review the key influences on Korea's geopolitical environment: China, Japan, and the United States (Zhu et al., 2007; Bae and Rowley, 2004; Rowley et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2000; Kim and Briscoe, 1997; Ralston et al., 1997; Chang and Chang, 1994). The key influences on the Korean management system are identified as: Japan and the United States (military), Confucianism and collectivism (company as family-type community, paternalism), *Inwha* (harmony)

and solidarity, loyalty and cooperation to individuals, *Yon-go* (connections, especially by clan, blood, geography, education), authoritarianism in leadership, and sharp distinction between owners/ managers/workers. In Korea, the influence of Buddhism and Confucianism provided a normative framework for work (Kuchinke, 2009; Cho, 2009; Rowley et al., 2004). Confucianism dominated the discussion of Korean management in which authoritarian managerial practice was widely viewed as an expression of traditional Korean or Confucian culture (Lie, 2006; Chang and Chang, 1994; Sin, 1984). Other academics (Rhee and Chang, 2002; Park, Rowley, Sohn, and Bae (eds.), 2002) have not agreed with Chang and Chang's (1994) assessment of Confucianism's dominant influence and instead argue that change is occurring and point to prevalent criticism of traditional Korean business practices in regards to business systems and management in support of their view.

Critics have argued that cultural explanations assume that culture not only fulfills a specific role, but that it is likely to persist despite social actions and choices of individuals and endemic systemic crises (Hofstede, 1998; Lowe, 2001,

2002, 2007, Brinkman, 2003; Westwood and Everett, 1987; Peterson, 2007). Some researchers (Newman and Nollen, 1996; Lowe, 2001, 2002; Ralston et al., 2008; Moulette, 2007) argue that Hofstede's approach on organisational cultures should be distinguished from approaches that evaluate national cultures. Further, they suggest that Western culturally derived models are an inadequate tool for understanding Asian culture and management (Lowe, 2007, 2002, and 2001; Zhu et al., 2007; Cho and Yeon, 2001; Ralston et al., 1997; Engardio, 1995; Pye, 1995).

1.2 Culture and HRM practices

In Eastern Asian business systems, three driving forces have been identified: cultural legacy, social context, and corporate leadership (Cho and Park, 1998; Rowley, Sohn, and Bae (eds.), 2002). Cultural values have helped to form HRM practices. Managerial recruitment, selection, and management compensation practices may illustrate the impact of traditional cultural values on management. However, there is continuing debate by culturalists as to whether organisations are culture-free or culture-bound (Song and Meek, 1998; Birnbaum and Wong, 1985; Clegg et al., 1986; Hickson et al., 1979;

Hofstede, 1980; Lincoln et al., 1986; Marsh and Mannari, 1980). According to some theorists, the core ideology of the traditional Korean HRM system is said to have changed from a collective orientation toward individualistic and market economies (Zhu et al., 2007; Rowley et al., 2004; Puck and Lim, 2002; Rhee and Chang, 2002). Therefore, this researcher's point is to stress the influence this change has on today's modern Korean society and the workplace.

1.3 Culturalist explanations for gender discrimination in Korea

Patriarchy has had a decisive impact on the lives of women in most, or arguably, all cultures around the globe, with women's work participation and capital seldom threatening the existing patriarchal traditions (Thompson, 2002; Banerjeet, 1999). When a cultural influence causes society to discriminate against females, employers will create a large gender wage gap (Banerjeet, 1999; Meng, 1998). In traditional Korean society, due to the strong legacy of Confucian philosophy, human relationships were hierarchically ordered according to age and gender (Kim, 1998; Rhee and Chang, 2002; Kelkar and Osawa, 1999).

1.4 Limitations of culturalist explanations

Economies do reinvent themselves, with the new structures of business in the East Asian 'miracle' economies being explained by *culturalists* with reference to pre-modern belief systems, e.g. Confucianism influence on Korean management practices. More recently, one sees this reinvention explained by *institutionalists* who reference pre-modern traditions and emerging 'institutional environments' (Bacharach, 1989, Wilkinson, 1996, Lowe, 2002). However, institutionalism does not seem to critically analyze the activities of East Asian business elites as those that use an institutionalist approach to analysing economies have focused on internal institutional mechanisms and practices and neglected the external influence of the role and practices of business elites that have influence across institutions. In contrast, Lowe's (1998) framework uses *culturalist* and *institutionalist* explanations and combines them to create models derived from formal market hierarchy perspectives and informal network perspectives. Additionally, recent institutionalist literature has presented alternatives to cultural accounts and identifies the *welfare corporatist* classification to char-

acterise certain Far East Asian companies (Dore, 1976, 2000; Lincoln and Kallenberg, 1990).

2. Legislation/Labour market participation

2.1 Theoretical perspectives on gender discrimination:

Neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on the importance of individual ‘choice’ for the work environment, became more influential in Britain and Australia for example, in purporting to explain women’s decision around work (Cha and Thebaud, 2009; Crompton and Lyonette, 2005; Standing, 1999; Razavi, 1997; Elson, 1993; Razavi and Palmer, 1991). Women are said to be less likely than men to participate in the labour force owing to demographic, social, legal and cultural trends and norms (Elder and Johnson, 1999; Crompton and Lyonette, 2002). Under the influence of neoliberalist policies, women continued to earn lower average wages and average earnings than men in most occupations in most countries. These policies place an emphasis on “choice”, in effect stating that women choose to stay at home due to Confucian values, instead of participating in the work force

(Joo, 2008; Walby et al., 2007; Jung and Choi, 2004; Robinson, 1998). Neo-liberalism concludes that outcomes result from individual choices.

2.2 Legislation and labour market in general

According to various ideologies of femininity, women are temporary, supplementary, pliant, patient, and cheap labour (or labour made cheap) (Pettman, 2003; Enloe, 1992; Beechey and Perkins, 1988). Globalisation rapidly increases the demand for women’s labour. The ideologies of femininity are seen to consist of different groups with the three most important theoretical variations of gender relations being the male breadwinner, gendered politics, and the gender regime, which will be assessed in the context of the Korean workplace (Walby et al., 2007; Turner and Monk, 2007; Lee and Cho, 2000; Ridgeway, 1997; England, 1992; Crompton and Sanderson, 1990; Bradley, 1989). Utilizing these theoretical frames, this researcher will explore which variation is most relevant in the Korean context. By determining the relevant framework, the researcher will attempt to ascertain ways to lessen the inequalities in gender relations. Walby et al. (2007) cha-

racterises these ideologies, which will be assessed in the context of the Korean workplace, as follows: 1) The male breadwinner is where Marxist feminists see gender inequality as part of social class inequality and the capitalistic market system of production that creates social class inequality and women's economic dependence on men (Walby et al., 2007; Lee and Cho, 2000); 2) The gender politics refers to the historical exclusion of women from public roles, power and citizenship (Klein, 1995; Walby, 1988; Klein, 1984); and 3) Organisations are posited to have "gender regimes", e.g., internal structures, processes and beliefs that distribute women and men into different tasks and positions where there is a systematic interrelationship between different dimensions of gender relations (Acker, 2006; Walby, 1986, 1990, 1994, 1997, 2007; Connell, 1987, 2002; Pan and Pascall, 2004; Blackburn et al., 2002). Walby (2007) points out that gender relations are formed in relation to processes of class, ethnicity, nation, religion, and other forms of differences.

2.3 Legislation/Labour Market participation in Korea

In some societies, women often have

equal or higher educational attainment than men. However, higher education for women does not necessarily lead to a smaller pay gap. Curiously, in Korea, the pay gap **increases** with the level of education obtained, which justifies this specific research into the Korean patterns of gender and work (ILO, 2008; ITUC, 2008). Why is legislation to promote equity, including hiring quotas, seemingly not working? Or does it work? Has the government role in enforcing and promoting equal opportunities for women been effective? Or, as McKinsey (2004) surmises, has their focus primarily been on passing legislation rather than on creating effective monitoring and enforcing mechanisms? Or do some government policies have a negative effect on other stated legislative objectives, such as gender equality?

A range of policies have been legislated to eradicate discriminations and establish equal opportunity at work places. So far, government has taken little initiative to increase the availability of childcare. There has been a lack of progress in accepting a dual-earner model of the family, which is said to be due to Confucian ideals (Kim, 2007; Moon, 2007; Cho and Lee, 2007; The Korea Times,

2006; Won and Pascall, 2004). There have been periods of adjustment regarding women in the work place; however, there has been a continuity of low labour participation rates for female workers. If one reviews the existing literature, the majority of research into the status of working women in Korea has concentrated on women in the manufacturing and service industries where they are employed in lower rank positions, the exception being the Brinton and Choi (2006) study that conducted research on professional women. The authors pointed out that few papers have been printed in the English language.

VI. Research Questions

Specific research questions include the following: (1) an examination of the interaction between Korean patriarchal norms, culturally driven firm practices, and increased globalisation. For example, if the very top executive level of a firm is non-Korean, does that actually result in better average career progress for Korean female employees. (2) What is the impact of other government policies on their stated goal of increasing

equality in the workplace? Has deregulation of the labour market increased women's participation overall but decreased participation, retention, and promotion of women, in particular, highly-educated Korean women. (3) Which cultural norms are most inhibiting to the hiring, retention, and promotion of women? For example, does the requirement to work long hours have the most significant effect or do other factors in the Korean context such as the prevalence of corruption and the drinking/entertainment demands of the Korean business culture? (4) Have other studies suffered from 'survivor' bias and can this study, though not longitudinal, attempt to address this? For example, can it track and collect responses from women who departed from one of the target companies and went elsewhere for employment or left the formal sector or the workplace? (5) Is it possible to show that there is a strong correlation between Korean women's **departures** from the workplace and their subsequent status? Would carefully collected empirical results demonstrate that **gender alone** is the primary determinant of women's status in the Korean workplace? The researcher proposes to answer these questions by collecting data

on people's experiences and perceptions.

VII. Methods

Based on Sayer's approach (1992, p. 83), the data collection exercise will be founded on the observation and knowledge that social reality is "theory-laden" rather than theory-determined. The extensive research design (e.g. large scale survey of a population or representative sample) is used when the focus of the study is to form empirical regularities between processes and is mainly concerned with uncovering the common properties and general patterns of the study of ethnic groups as a whole (for example, Korean). For the purpose of the pilot study, a quantitative survey design was chosen. This pilot study was conducted in order to test the value and effectiveness of the modified WERS survey.

1. Pilot Study

1.1 Method

This empirical research was conducted at both multinationals and domestic companies in Korea. Foreign firms were included in order to ascertain if there is

a significant difference in gender equality between domestic and foreign firms. There has long been anecdotal evidence that Korean women find more gender equality at foreign firms; when the large-scale survey is completed, it is estimated that this anecdotal evidence can be quantified (i.e. proved or disproved within a reasonable probability). From the population of 137,782 domestic and 313 foreign companies in the year of 2009 (Kor-ChamBiz, 2009), 50 companies were selected using a quota sampling. Then a questionnaire survey was conducted online by means of a link which was emailed to the contacts who worked in the sampled companies in Korea.

1.2 Questionnaire

The survey instrument was adapted from the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS, 2004) Cross-Section Management Survey conducted in the UK. This extensive survey covers a range of areas pertaining to the usage of women, and issues relating to discrimination in general. It was selected as other studies have utilised data from the 1998 and 2004 WERS for papers on gender equality and diversity and equal opportunity policies and practices (Walsh, 2007; Hoque

and Noon, 2004; Pe'rotin and Robinson, 2002). For the purpose of the pilot survey, the WERS was used as the model, limiting the questionnaire to only questions relative to gender bias/equality. Additional questions were included to establish how gender correlates with Korean culture. The questionnaire was prepared in both English and Korean.

1.3 Subject

The population for the pilot survey response was limited to a non-probability sample of 50 Korean and foreign firms in Korea, supplemented by an extensive usage of primary and secondary documentation. Of the 50 distributed surveys, 24 responded (19 partially and 5 completely). Follow-up investigation indicated respondents' confusion about some questions as well as some technical difficulties.

1.4 Findings

The findings from the pilot survey, reported by the respondents, revealed that Korean firms are credited with improvement in their treatment of women in the workplace; however, it is still within the context of a strong masculine culture based on Confucianism. The response rate

was approximately 50 percent. However, studies were incomplete. The results from the pilot study were statistically inconclusive. However, the most significant findings regarding fair treatment are that 66.7 percent of the respondents stated that there is a formal written policy on equal opportunities or managing diversity and 75 percent of the respondents indicated that the policy explicitly did not mention equality of treatment or discrimination. Recent legislation has attempted to bring about fundamental changes in the Korean workplace regarding hiring practices and promotion of women, and these were referred to by survey respondents, but this process is slow and uneven. With the global financial crisis, this has affected firms where downsizing has occurred to a certain degree within Korea.

1.5 Suggestions

The pilot survey provided valuable insights and further helped to focus the researcher on to how to make the survey more relevant to the Korean context. In follow-up telephone or email interviews, the respondents found the survey very lengthy. The researcher believes that the modified WER Survey was too focused

on labour relations and not enough regarding gender discrimination. The survey instrument, therefore, needs to be further refined for the subsequent study. This pilot study was only a very small sample of the Korean workforce; the main study requires a larger sample with more widely distributed companies in terms of location, size, and industry. The future large-scale survey needs to be changed to get an acceptable response rate.

2. Methods for the main study

2.1 Data collection

For the purpose of a more in-depth, large-scale study, the modified WERS survey will be refined, utilising primarily fair treatment in the workplace questions. Administration of the survey will be delegated to a professional research company in order to achieve an acceptable response rate. Using the questionnaire designed by the researcher, the research company will distribute the questionnaire and gather responses. The WERS does not include questions regarding education level of respondents; since this research study is about highly educated Korean females, the WERS must be sup-

plemented by other equally valid and reliable instruments. This study will be designed and modeled by also taking into consideration two similar studies: (1) Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau and Oguz's (2000) study, which tested two forms of gender discrimination, sexual harassment and gender evaluation (the use of gender as a criteria for job-related outcomes based on Joplin and Shaffer, 1997); there are similarities to this study in regards to cultural and social characteristics as well as legislation and enforcement regarding gender discrimination, and (2) a study conducted by Korea Data Network, the company that the researcher will engage, which has experience with a similar topic, where it collected data from 2,400 female managers in the years of 2007 and 2008 for a project conducted by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (KMOGEF). The 2008 survey included both male and female managers with both surveys achieving high response rates of approximately 40 percent because of the solidly constructed survey design and methodology. Therefore, this study expects a similar response rate. Focus groups will be conducted to ascertain if Koreans will respond more accurately and to acquire more of personal perspective and provide two sets of data

enabling comparison for accuracy. Another avenue of increasing the response rate will be through aggressive follow-ups (telephonic and e-mail).

As mentioned previously, the pilot survey provided valuable insights and further helped to focus this researcher regarding how to make the survey more relevant to the Korean context. By conducting this pilot survey, one realised the need to refine the survey instrument further and conduct an intermediate survey (or near future study).

2.2 Subject

Due to the issue of the low response rate of the pilot study, a more in-depth near future study will be conducted to test the further modified WERS by using a convenience sample of KyungHee University College of Business's evening class post graduate students; they are all professional men and women continuing their education. The researcher will utilise the WERS, with the questions further modified from the pilot study to be more concise. These students will cooperate in completing the survey due to the professor-student relationship. The research will also assess the possibility of

including modified or additional questions, suggested by various theoretical approaches to gender equality in the workplace.

2.3 Questionnaire

Using the insights learned through the pilot study and the survey instrument of KMOGEF studies, the survey instrument will be revised by reflecting the research focus of the main study. Then the refinement process will be continued with the MBA students before conducting the main study.

2.4 Analysis

For the main study, the data will be analysed using SPSS statistical software. The following different types of analysis methods will be employed: (1) For the data description, univariate analyses such as descriptive statistics, frequencies, and graphical presentations will be presented; (2) For significant differences between two or more groups, bivariate analyses such as correlation, t-test, ANOVA, and Chi-square test will be used as they are concerned with the simultaneous investigation of two or more characteristics. These characteristics are measured over a set of objects and are appropriate for

this study since the researcher's interest is in the relationships that exist among gender differences in the Korean workplace (Kachigan, 1986); and (3) For the significant factors influencing gender discrimination, multiple regression or logistic regression models will be tested after defining independent and dependent variables, respectively.

VIII. Concluding remarks

This research focuses on the causes, nature and extent of gender imbalances in participation, tenure, rewards and associated terms and conditions of service in Korean work organizations, likely future trends, and policy options. The researcher will investigate theories that may best explain gender work force imbalances within Korea. The literature review has shown that the following regarding gender discrimination and the under-utilization of the highly-educated Korean females: (1) It is demonstrably unequal with unequal unusual ways/anomalies; (2) There are gaps in research where international theories are untested in Korea and the Korean research has not been independent and does not ex-

plain anomalies; (3) There are gaps in the pilot study, but it was a useful experience; (4) Empirical research can be informed by theoretical work questions and methods and new questions and the research into anomalies is justified; (5) Independent, academic explanation of the anomalies and persistent underutilisation of highly educated females in firms.

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