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Work-Life Balance for Working Mom and Dad in South Korea



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2017-2-3 Work-Life Balance for Working Mom and Dad in South Korea

[Case study]

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Work-Life Balance Policies in Public Organizations in South Korea

Demographic and sociological changes in the workforce along with the increasing participation of non-traditional employees (e.g., women, the disabled, the elderly, dual-career couples, and contingent workers) have been a compelling argument for creating an organizational environment where this heterogeneous group of people can work together (Ricucci 2002; Kim 2007; Kim & Mullins, 2016). In particular, it has been widely noted that these non-traditional employees may have greater difficulties balancing their work roles with their personal or family roles. Working women, for example, often need to perform their roles as primary care-givers for their dependents at home while performing their roles in the workplace. As men are sharing the household burdens to a greater extent, especially those with a working partner, they are experiencing greater workloads and resultant role conflict between work and home. However, this is not limited to those with caregiving responsibilities. Interconnectedness between work and family/life can be an important issue that needs to be addressed to whoever has a need for balancing work and life. It is with the understanding that there can be either

positive or negative spill-over between work and domestic responsibilities and identities (Halford et al., 1997). The conflict between work and life that results from incompatible roles and consequent job-related stress negatively affect job outcomes by lowering employees' attendance rates, job commitment, job satisfaction, and performance. Therefore, it becomes necessary for organizations to find ways to eliminate or minimize possible role conflict between work and life and help balance these dual roles effectively (Ricucci, 2002; Lapierre et al., 2008). In some western countries such as the United States, the government mandates various work-life policies such as child care subsidies, alternative work schedules, elder care, and paid leave. These are considered a major component of human resource management practices.

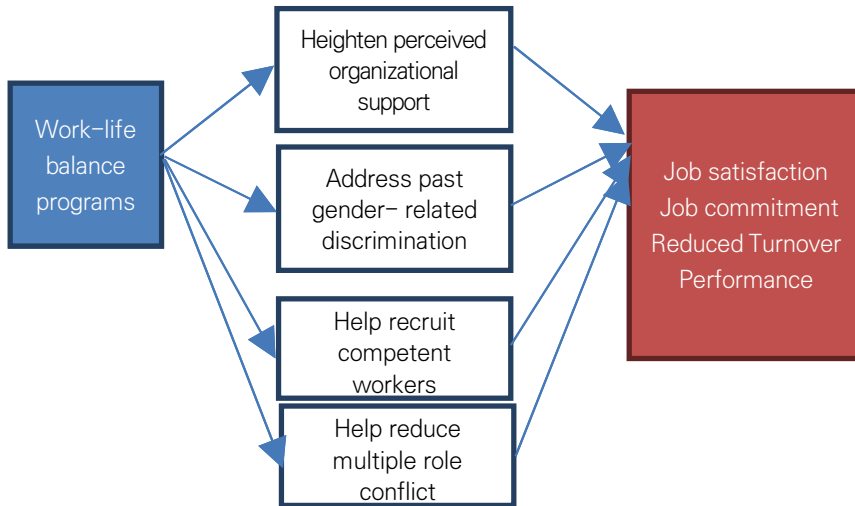
South Korea is not an exception to this trend. Several work-life balance policies have been implemented, with expectations that those policies would bring positive organizational outcomes. However, even though there have been increases in the number of available work-life balance promoting policies, questions remain as to whether or not those policies have brought expected or targeted outcomes and, if not, what should be considered to materialize the proposed benefits of work-life policies. This case report aims to introduce students to an overview of work-life balance policies in South Korea. Specifically, this case directs students' attention to challenges the universal application of those work-life balance policies may face when implemented without consideration of organizational conditions or culture.

Addressing Interconnectedness between Work and Family/Life: Proposed Benefits of Work-Life Balance Policies

It is suggested that the synergy from positive spillover between work and family would support well-being in all aspects of life and contribute positively to organizational performance. On the other hand, negative spillover between work and family in which either work or family obligations interfere with each other would undermine the employee's and family's overall well-being and result in negative organizational outcomes such as burnout, turnover, and lowered organizational productivity (Grzyward 2000; Riccucci 2002). Thus, it is critical for organizations to address work-life interconnectedness and actively seek ways to maximize the positive spillover while minimizing the negative spillover. In this regard, an increasing number of organizations, especially governmental organizations as a model employer, have made great efforts to introduce and implement so-called work-life balance policies seeking for the positive impacts on organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, increased productivity, reduced turnover rate, and stronger job commitments. The benefits of these have been documented (Saltzstein et al., 2001; Riccucci 2002; Kim 2007; Lee & Hong 2011). Work-life balance policies are defined as "any organizational programs or officially sanctioned practices designed to assist employees with the integration of paid work with other important life roles such as family, education, or leisure" (Ryan & Kossek, 2008: 295). These policies have been suggested to deliver positive organizational outcomes in several ways: 1) helping recruit and reach out to qualified but historically disadvantaged groups, especially female employees; 2) retaining qualified employees by creating a work environment conducive to meeting employees' multiple roles in both work and family; 3) addressing past gender-related discrimination in HR practices; and 4)

motivating them to perform better by increasing their job satisfaction and commitment while reducing their turnover intention (see Figure 1).

| Figure 1 | Proposed Benefits of Work-Life Balance Practices



However, when it comes to the practice, the under-use pattern¹⁾ has been often reported even though a variety of programs under the balance policies are available to employees. One of the reasons employees do not utilize those programs is because they do not want to identify themselves with employees of the so-called ‘mommy track.’ ‘Mommy track²⁾’ employees are usually viewed

1) Citing the results of the 2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (2011), Kim & Mullins (2016: 84) pointed out this underuse pattern of federal employees especially in child-care programs compared to other work-life balance programs and noted, “availability of work-life balance policies does not necessarily result in perceived accessibility or even actual use by employees.” For example, the use of an alternative work schedule could also be a reason for possible backlash and negative career outcomes even though it targets all employees. It is assumed that the use of flexible work scheduling creates more work for other coworkers in the same work unit. The use of flexible work schedules might negatively affect career outcomes for those who work with a supervisor who prefers to manage subordinates face-to-face. Kim & Wiggin (2011) noted a gender difference in the level of satisfaction with work-life balance programs. In their study, different pay grades also differently affect employees’ satisfaction with alternative work schedule.

by their supervisors or colleagues as less competent and qualified in comparison to their male colleagues or those without child-rearing responsibilities. Another explanation is that given the lack of supervisory support or any supporting organizational culture, some employees are observed to feel hesitant to use family-friendly programs due to their fear over possible backlash and negative career outcomes. Moreover, recent studies note the tension those policies may cause between certain targeted demographic groups and non-targeted groups (e.g. between married couples with children and unmarried or childless employees)³⁾. The question of who has access to such policies becomes critical to shaping employees' perception of fairness in adopting and implementing those policies as Kirby and Krone (2002, 51) note, "The fact that a policy exists on paper does not mean it is always accepted as legitimate or followed as written." These observations have fueled further inquiry into practical

2) "Mommy track" refers to women who may be modifying their career aspirations to look after their family.

3) Working moms are categorized into two groups: the first group is a "career primary track" for women who prioritize work over their family and who are willing to spend long working hours if they are necessary and helpful for their career advancement, even when it means sacrificing time with their family. The second group is the "mommy track," or women who may be modifying their career aspirations to look after their family. The working mom in the mommy track is usually perceived as less competent and qualified compared to male colleagues. Bruce & Reed (1992: 120) noted, "What the track does is to affirm the traditional value of a 'mother's place' in a separate sphere, rather than offering a choice to either parent. ... Truly family-friendly benefits will allow for a 'daddy track' and a 'parent track' as well as a mommy track. The key to providing family-friendly benefits is to provide choices, not paternalistic solutions." Increasing numbers of working men are assuming care giving responsibilities for children or elderly dependents, which means that family-friendly programs are not only for advancing women's interests. Nevertheless, colleagues who do not have any dependents may perceive that their colleagues with family responsibilities are treated with favoritism in their organization. Such policies targeting one specific group may create a so-called "family-friendly backlash," that is, resentment among employees who are single or childfree. That is, it is plausible to assume that employees may be reluctant to use those benefits for fear of facing negative judgments from others who may view them as less committed to their job (Allen, 2001), given the tension those policies may cause between certain targeted demographic groups and non-targeted groups (e.g., between married couple with children and unmarried or childless).

implications that work-life balance policies may have for different employees under different contexts.

Providing family friendly benefits is critical for setting up the context of managing a diversified workforce, but it is not enough to help employees coordinate their multiple work and life roles and bring positive returns to both their family and their employing organizations. The following description in the Korean context presented below and the hypothetical cases of an employee in Korea may help understand what conditions should be met or needed to realize the benefits of work-life balance programs.

Context for Work-Life Balance Policies in South Korea

Due to the long-held Confucian ideology that imposes patriarchal values, South Korea has been a male-dominated society where women's role as a caregiver in the family is often taken for granted. In the past, it was women's primary responsibility to care for their elderly-in-law along with their own family members. Women, as the primary care giver, were expected to prioritize their family over their career whereas men were usually considered as their family's sole breadwinner. That is, even when women are highly educated enough to pursue a promising career, it was a social norm that women with family or children put their career aside and become housewives. Due to this gender role shaped by Confucian gender ideology, there have been limits in shared childcare responsibilities in marriage. Confucianism is not a dominating value in the current Korean society as it was in the past, but its influence still remains. In fact, Korea's gender equality ranking is quite lower than that of other countries. According to the 2015 Global Gender Gap Report, South Korea was ranked 115th out of 145 countries in terms of gender equality. The range of jobs available to women has been restricted to medium- to low-status occupations such as

secretaries, teachers, or clerical assistants (Kim, 2008). Women who have jobs often suffer from gender discrimination in the workplace such as sexual harassment or fewer opportunities for career advancement in the workplace. In order to address this issue, the Korean government has taken many steps that include creating a work environment conducive to gender-equal employment; addressing the women's chronic career disruption; and helping women balance their work and life. For example, the Gender Equal Employment Act of 1987 was enacted to ensure equal opportunity and treatment in employment. The Infant Care Act (1991) was enacted to help poor families in their child-rearing responsibilities. The Women's Development Act was enacted in 1995 to protect women's rights and fight against workplace discrimination; it was later revised as the Framework Act on Gender Equality in 2014 to protect gender equality. A gender quota system in recruiting and preferential hiring for qualified women in government positions was introduced in 1997. Maternity Protection Laws took effect in 2001 to distribute the cost burden of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. Under the Kim Dae-jung administration, the Ministry of Gender Equality who is solely handling women's affairs was established to develop and implement women's policies and prevent gender discrimination in 2002. It was renamed the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (MGEF) in 2005 to take responsibility for policies related to women, family and youth, and children. In 2014, a taskforce was created through a public-private partnership with the aim to develop plans and programs to promote gender equality. As a result, the status of women in South Korea has been greatly improved as shown in the Table 1 and Figure 2, though there is still room for improvement.

Women's Employment and Employment Type: Table 1 provides a snapshot of women's employment in South Korea. As the data show, while women's

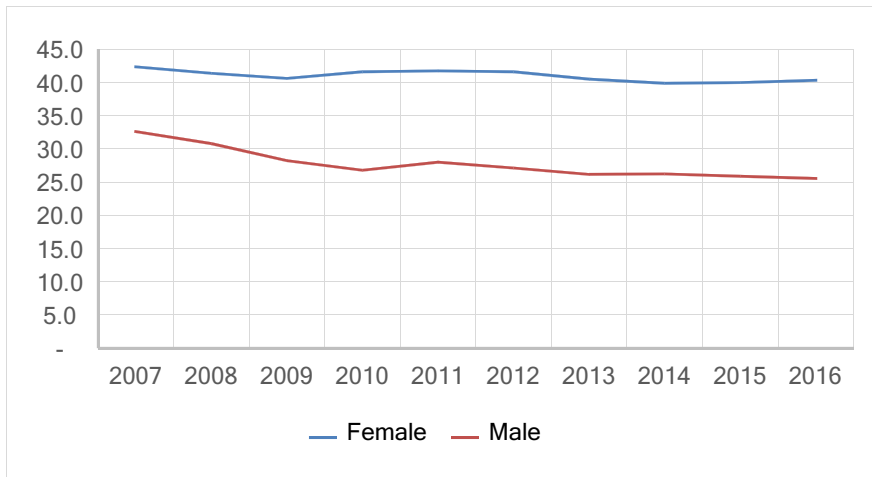
employment has increased over time since 2007, the ratio of non-regular workers, either temporary or part-time workers, is constantly around 40% of total employment.

| Table 1 | Women's Employment Trend by Employment Type

	Total	full-time (regular)	temporary or part-time (non-regular)
2007	6,625	3,820	2,805
2008	6,756	3,962	2,795
2009	6,768	4,020	2,748
2010	7,075	4,132	2,943
2011	7,240	4,218	3,021
2012	7,499	4,379	3,119
2013	7,618	4,534	3,084
2014	7,968	4,791	3,177
2015	8,152	4,894	3,259
2016	8,423	5,028	3,395

Source: Statistics Korea.

| Figure 2 | Ratio of Temporary Workers



Source: Statistics Korea.

When compared to men’s employment, the ratio of non-regular employment of women is higher by about 10% (See Figure 2). As of 2016, 25% of male workers hold either temporary or part-time jobs, whereas 40% of women have those non-regular jobs. Women tend to be concentrated in non-regular employment compared to their counterparts. Regarding this trend, using a panel data analysis, the Korean Women’s Development Institute (2015) provides further analysis showing that women’s rate of taking non-regular jobs increases in their 40’s and 50’s because after child-birth or due to childcare burdens, an increasing number of women abandon their full-time jobs or transfer to part-time or temporary status.

Women’s Representation in Government: Table 2 provides a snapshot of women’s employment in government jobs. It appears that representation of women in government jobs has been improved. The percentage of women holding government jobs has steadily increased to 33.7% of the civil service

as of 2015.

| Table 2 | Women in the Korean Government

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total	275,484	275,231	278,303	279,636	281,035	284,355	287,299	289,914	296,273
Women	78,855	80,666	82,178	83,282	84,239	87,239	89,979	94,346	99,865
Ratio (%)	28.6	29.3	29.5	29.8	30	30.7	31.3	32.5	33.7

Source: Statistics Korea.

However, when it comes to upper-level managerial positions (Grade 4 and higher), women's representation is still quite low. While female employees constitute 32.5% of total government employment in 2014, only 9% held managerial positions in government. The ratio of women holding managerial positions in government has remained constant at about 8~9% (See Table 3).

| Table 3 | Ratio of Women Holding Managerial Positions in Government

	Grade 4 or higher	Ratio of Women (%)
2011	7,132	7.3
2012	7,326	8.2
2013	7,256	8.8
2014	7,444	9.7

Source: Statistics Korea.

Choi & Park (2014) noted a similar pattern when examining employment of women at all governmental levels including central and local governments. The percentage of female employees who hold upper-level jobs (Grade 4 and higher) is 6.5% when combining all career civil servants and contract civil servants at all governmental levels and only 4.4% in positions higher than Grade 4 in local government (See Table 4). These trends show that

women continue to be concentrated in lower-level, non-managerial positions in government, indicating the existence of glass ceiling.

Table 4 | Employment of Women in Korean Government (Executive Branch) by Grade

Classification	All governments		Central government		Local government	
	All employees	Female (%)	All employees	Female (%)	All employees	Female (%)
Total	964,158	42.0	622,737	47.2	341,421	32.4
Senior civil service	1,034	3.2	997	3.3	37	0.0
Grades 1-2	66	1.5			66	1.5
Grade 3	959	4.6	617	4.7	342	4.4
Grade 4	8,368	6.5	5,461	7.2	2,907	5.3
Grade 5	29,112	10.8	12,443	13.7	16,669	8.6
Grade 6	82,946	19.7	24,941	19.0	58,005	20.0
Grade 7	108,547	40.7	28,973	28.7	79,574	45.0
Grade 8	56,351	50.8	19,509	45.3	36,942	53.7
Grade 9	32,339	52.6	13,002	48.3	19,337	55.6

Source: Adapted from Choi & Park (2014, Table 2: 9).

Gender Pay Gap: When it comes to gender pay gap, it turns out that women continue to get paid less than their male counterparts. Even though the gap is becoming much narrower, the pay gap still exists. The latest figures show that female full-time workers earned about 68 percent of men's earnings as of 2013.

Table 5 | Gender Pay Gap

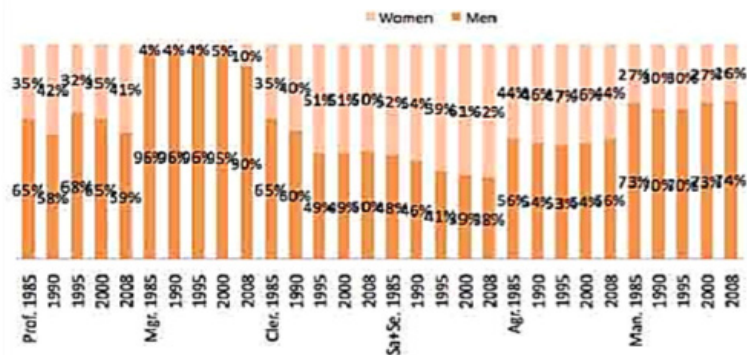
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total	1,314	1,888	2,360	2,454	2,567	2,660
Female	954	1,396	1,772	1,862	1,958	2,033
Male	1,474	2,109	2,648	2,750	2,878	2,986
Ratio	64.7	66.2	66.9	67.7	68	68.1

Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor.

The occupational segregation between men and women is suggested as one of the major determinants of the gender pay gap. Men tend to be employed

in high-paying professions such as doctors, or professors, whereas women are more likely to be employed in low-paying professions such as clerks or secretaries. Park (2016) analyzed the occupational segregation status in South Korea by gender using the data from the International Labor Organization (ILO). Her study found that while more men hold professional or managerial occupations, more women were found in service, clerk or sales occupations, accounting for greater gender earnings gaps as shown in Figure 3. Childcare or dependent care responsibilities are suggested to greatly shape women’s decision to choose a certain type of occupations, because being a good mother or good wife is a highly regarded value that women are expected to uphold in Korean society. Therefore, women are more likely to look for occupations where they can find flexibility with their working hours so that they can take time off for family related reasons when needed, even though they are lower-paying careers.

| Figure 3 | Occupation by male and female in South Korea



Source: Adapted from Park (2016: 27).

Childcare as Major Impediment to Women’s Employment and career advancement: Work and family conflict, gender stereotypes and discrimination, and male-dominated workplace culture are suggested as major obstacles to women’s employment and career advancement (Choi & Park, 2014). As for sharing household responsibilities, there have been changes in the perceptions of men with whom an increasing number perceive household responsibilities should be fairly shared. However, in reality, Korean working women still do more housework and childcare at home compared to their male partners. According to the 2014 social survey, 50 percent of those surveyed said that chores should be distributed fairly, while in reality 80 percent indicated that women performed the majority of chores at home when asked who regularly performs the majority of chores (see Table 6).

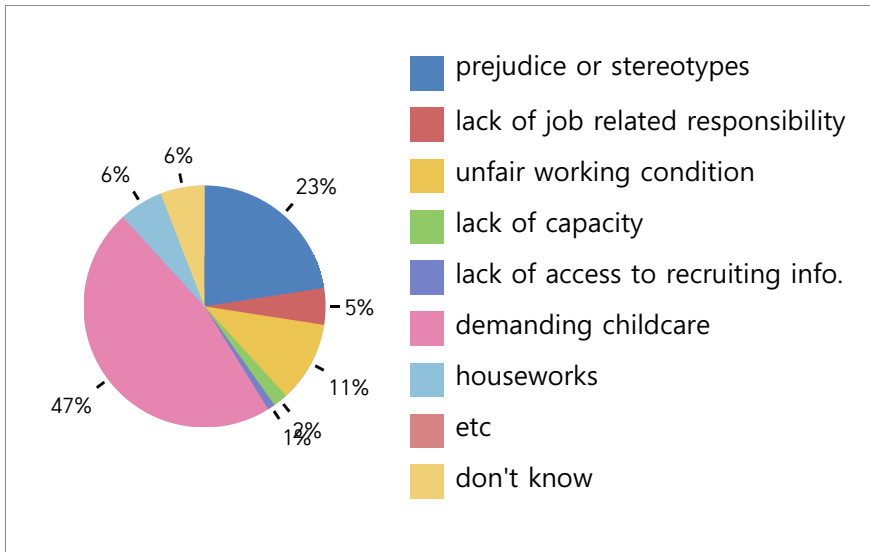
| Table 6 | Distribution of households

		Women primarily	Fair distribution	Men primarily
Opinion	2008	66.5	32.5	1.1
	2010	61.3	36.8	1.9
	2012	52	45.3	2.7
	2014	50.2	47.5	2.3
Reality	Husband	80.5	16.4	3.1
	Wife	81.5	16	2.5

Source: 2014 Social Survey.

Figure 4 shows perceived impediments to women’s employment according to a 2015 social survey. About 48% of respondents chose “heavy demands of childcare” as one of the main impediments to women’s employment, while about 23% of respondents chose assumptions about women’s job attitude or capacity or stereotypes.

| Figure 4 | Impediments to women’s employment



Source: 2015 Social Survey

Work-life Balance Promoting Policies: Given this context, the Korean government has implemented a variety of work-life policies for the purpose of helping female employees with their employment and career advancement. Examples of work-life balance programs include leave programs such as 1) ante-natal leave, which is one day of paid leave per month during pregnancy; 2) maternity leave, which offers 90 days of paid leave before and after the birth of a child (with the condition that after childbirth 45 days must be taken); 3) paternity leave offering three days of paid leave at the birth of a child; 4) parental leave of one year or up to three years of leave for each child; 5) leave for family reasons, such as one year of leave for caring for a sick family member; 6) health leave, which is one day of paid leave per month for women; and 7) breast-feeding leave, which is one hour of paid leave per day to care for a child.

Many of these types of leave specifically address women because female

employees are more likely to have more needs for work/life balance due to their responsibilities as child bearers and their potentially inevitable need of a periodic leave for childbirth (Ricucci 2002). For example, employed women can take maternity leave with three months of full payment. Working women or their husbands with a child under 8 years are eligible to take up to 3 years of childcare leave. From the employees' perspective, these leave programs enable working parents to balance their work and family life. From an employee's perspective, they help retain competent and qualified employees and foster their work motivation (Ricucci, 2002; Kim, 2008; Kim & Mullins, 2016).

Under the amended Gender Equal Employment Act of 1995 and the Infant Care Act, employers who have more than 300 women employees are required to have childcare facilities.

As a result, the number of organizations offering on-site childcare has slightly increased over time and as of 2014, 692 organizations offered on-site childcare (see Table 7). Choi (2007) found that about 32% of female respondents and about 17% of male respondents had used on-site childcare.

| Table 7 | Number of Available Childcare Centers

No. of available childcare centers	2012	2013	2014
National or Public childcare center	2,203	2,332	2,489
On-site childcare center	523	619	692

Source: Statistics Korea.

Flexible work schedules are available in some cases so that part-time work arrangement can be made, and some public organizations have tried to provide facilities for breastfeeding or pumping breast milk in the workplace or, depending on budgetary status, on-site childcare (Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, 2005). As for the flexible work policies, the most common types of flexible work arrangements are flextime, adjusted work-hours and working from home. As of 2014, among 1,000 organizations examined, it turns out that about 13.8 percent of organizations adopted flextime; 3.4 percent adopted the option of working from home, and 4.7 percent adopted adjusted work-week schedule (4 days per week schedule). These accommodations are provided in the belief that the implementation of these policies and organizational support for facilitating employees' use are critical for recruiting and retaining talented and experienced workforces⁴).

Table 8 and Figure 5 show the pattern of using maternity and paternity leave combined. The use of maternity and paternity leave increased over time. In particular, women's use of leave has constantly increased. On the other hand, while men are eligible to use this leave benefit, their use rate is slightly increasing but quite low when compared to women. As of 2014, only 4.5% of men used paternity leave. This may indicate that in South Korea, childcare is still regarded as women's duty or responsibility. Given that a working mother's relationship with her husband is traditional at home, it appears that husbands prioritize their careers while women take leaves in order to adjust to the needs of their families even when it means disrupting their career's advancement.

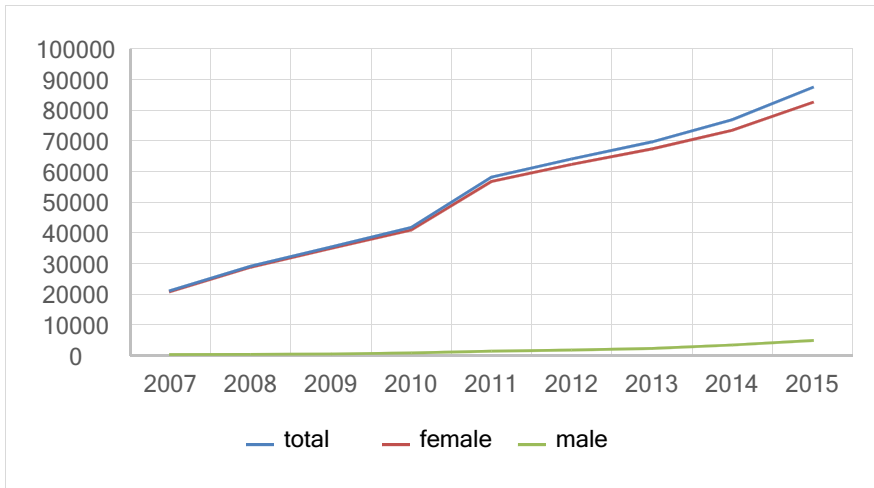
4) Moreover, to facilitate the adoption of family-friendly programs, the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family (MGEF) initiated a certification system that comes with financial incentives to public or private organizations who have successfully implemented family-friendly programs such as childbirth or childcare support or flextime. As of 2015, about 1,363 organizations had earned the certification.

| Table 8 | Maternity/Paternity leave Use Pattern

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total	21,185	29,145	35,400	41,733	58,137	64,069	69,616	76,833	87,339
Female	20,875	28,790	34,898	40,914	56,735	62,279	67,323	73,412	82,467
Male	310	355	502	819	1402	1790	2293	3421	4872

Source: Statistics Korea.

| Figure 5 | Maternity/Paternity leave Use Trend Chart



Source: Statistics Korea.

When asked about their employment status after taking maternity leave, about 60 percent indicated that as of 2013, they kept their job after they returned from maternity leave and its ratio is increasing over time. However, this statistics does not capture whether or not those employees returned to the position they were in before taking leaves.

| Table 9 | Employment Status and Maternity leave

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Ratio	53.7	51.5	52.6	54.9	57.3	59.5
No.	15,642	18,243	21,936	31,942	36,712	41,418

Source: Ministry of Employment and Labor.

Note: The ratio indicates the percentage of employees who keep their job after taking maternity leave;

No. indicates the number of employees who report staying in the same job after taking maternity leave.

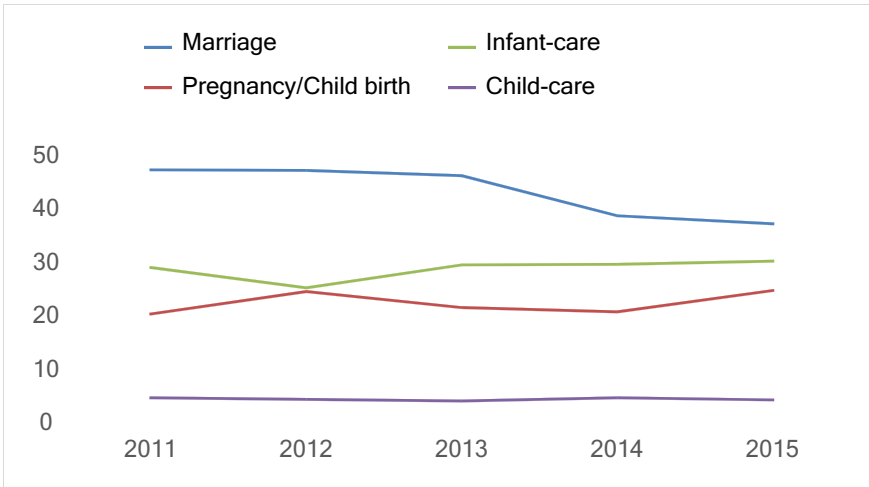
In fact, according to the report released by Statistics South Korea in 2015, the unemployment rate of married women ages 15 to 54 is about 41 percent. About 22 percent of married women between the ages of 15 to 54 either quit their jobs or expressed intention to leave their jobs because of family reasons such as pregnancy, childbirth, childcare, and dependent care. As for the primary reasons for women's career disruption, marriage was listed highest (about 36.9 %), followed by infant-care (29.9%) and pregnancy and childbirth (24.4).

| Table 10 | Working Mom's Career Disruption Rate

	2011	ratio	2012	ratio	2013	ratio	2014	ratio	2015	ratio
Total	1,900	100	1,978	100	1,955	100	2,139	100	2,053	100
Marriage	893	47	928	46.9	898	45.9	822	38.4	757	36.9
Pregnancy/ Child birth	380	20	479	24.2	414	21.2	436	20.4	501	24.4
Infant-care	545	28.7	493	24.9	571	29.2	627	29.3	614	29.9
Child-care	81	4.3	79	4	72	3.7	93	4.3	80	3.9

Source: Statistics Korea.

| Figure 6 | Reasons for Women’s Career Disruption Trend Chart



Source: Statistics Korea.

This may imply that many women still perceive their childbearing and childcare burden as a major obstacle to their career advancement. It may also be attributable to the lack of quality childcare facilities. As incidents of child abuse at daycare centers increase, an increasing number of working women have been asking their mothers-in-law to look after their kids even though this would cause travel problems. Citing the results of a 2007 survey of 1,000 participants conducted by the Ministry of the Interior, Yu & Kim (2009) reported that about 47% of respondents perceive the use of maternity or paternity leave negatively because they believe it negatively affects career advancement. As for their colleagues’ use of leave, about 46% of respondents indicate that they understand the needs of their colleagues with childcare obligations but perceive that the absence of their colleagues may increase their workload. Choi (2007) also made a similar observation using a survey of 617 government employees conducted by the Korean Institute of Public Administration. While 56% of women indicate severe difficulties in balancing

work and life, about 35% of men express difficulties. A majority of both men and women chose child-care as one of the major difficulties in balancing work and life. When asked about the reasons why they do not take maternity or paternity leave, a majority expressed concern about job security, career disruption, or negative impacts on promotion opportunities expected.

Moreover, there exist widespread concerns about career damage resulting from using extensive leave or alternative work scheduling for family purposes. In some cases, women who use leave for family purposes are likely to be viewed as “willing to trade some career growth and compensation for freedom from the constant pressure to work long hours and weekends” (Schwartz 1989: 70). Men are not an exception to this phenomenon because male employees seeking work-family balance by using those benefits may be confronted with career damage, especially when they have many colleagues who hold traditional views of gender roles and thus may not view a male employee’s use of family-friendly programs positively. To measure working parents’ attitudes toward family-friendly programs, Won & Pascall (2004: 281) conducted several interviews of working parents in South Korea. One of their interviewees noted, “In the current organizational culture, we are forced to choose between work and motherhood. ... When I applied for leave, I made up my mind that it was OK for my career to go slow because of it.” Another interesting observation was made by one of their male interviewees. He noted that when men take paternity leave, their colleagues and supervisor usually do not accept a “family-committed man,” and this jeopardized their reputation in the workplace and eventually their career.

The issues addressed above suggest that making policy available cannot in and of itself help materialize the proposed benefits of work-life balance policies. The following two hypothetical cases illustrate experiences of a typical working mom in South Korea. They illustrate gap between government’s

work-life balance policy and working mom's reality in Korea. Specifically, they provide examples that suggest consideration of cultural changes that are supportive of employee's balance between work, family, and personal life matters in overcoming challenges addressed above in relation to work-life balance policies.

Case 1. One Working Mom's Day

Jaehee is the mother of a 4-year-old girl, Yuna. Jaehee is currently working as a middle school teacher in a school located in the southern part of Seoul. Her typical day starts with waking up at 5:30 a.m. to prepare breakfast for her family and to get Yuna ready for school. The nearest and most affordable preschool is about 30 minutes away from her house and 7:00 a.m. is the earliest drop-off time with the latest time parents can pick up their children being 7:00 p.m. Since she needs to get to work by 8:00 a.m., she needs to make sure to send Yuna off to school by 7:00 a.m. so that she can have time to get ready to go to work. Yet somehow it always doesn't work as planned. She usually needs to squeeze a 30-minute commute into 20 minutes. She always needs to juggle among multiple household responsibilities between breakfast preparation and child-care including bathing, dressing, and feeding Yuna.

When her husband is available to share school drop-off duty, Jaehee can spend more time to take care of herself. However, in most cases, her husband is not available. Without a willing family member living nearby, she has little choice but to hire a nanny called an "attending school helper⁵⁾" who would help drop off her daughter to school. This would cost her extra money,

5) It is called as Deung-gyo Doumi in Korean.

approximately \$10 (10,000 won) per hour. Even though the latest hour is 7:00 p.m. at school, most kids are picked up by 4:00 p.m., and she may need to hire another nanny who would help pick up her daughter and spend some time with her until Jaehee or her husband comes home from work. Given the lack of any family members who live nearby, Jaehee must hire someone who can care for Yuna for 4 to 5 hours, costing her family an estimated \$1,300.00 (1,400,000 won). This amount is equivalent to approximately one-third of Jaehee's monthly salary. Given this situation, the only available option is either for her to stop her career and stay at home until Yuna grows up while worrying about meeting the family expenses solely on her husband's income, or for her and her husband to remain as a dual-earning couple to continue working while paying for child care services and not being able to spend any quality time with her daughter.

While at work Jaehee always feels guilty for leaving her little daughter, especially when Yuna is sick. Since Jaehee works at a school where most of her colleagues are well into their late 30's or early 40's with small or school-aged children, there is a general understanding by her colleagues about her felt difficulties in balancing her work and family, and her needs to take off from her job on time to be back to home to cater for her daughter. However, the lack of latitude over her work schedule makes it difficult for Jaehee to concentrate on work and perform properly. Additionally, even though return-to-work is guaranteed for a school teacher like her, her use of about a year of maternity and childcare leave caused her to feel that her career is interrupted and makes her feel pressured to do more work to catch up on what's going on at school. Her husband cannot take a long leave either because his work at a private company means his return-to-work may not be guaranteed and he doesn't want to take unpaid paternity leave due to financial reasons.

Jaehee tries to get home immediately after classes are over, usually around 5:30 p.m. She then tries to serve dinner at about 6:00 p.m. because she values shared dinner gatherings with her family. However, meeting this after work schedule proves difficult as Jaehee must often stay at school later than expected, and her husband often does not return home from work until 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. After dinner, Jaehee helps Yuna with her homework, if any, and does the laundry. The domestic contribution by her husband is limited to rare occasions. It is only after her daughter is asleep that she can carve out some time to have a chat with her husband to catch up on each other's day or finish up the left over work. Due to her working schedule, Jaehee can never fully engage in Yuna's after-school activities, leaving her feeling guiltier about not being able to spend quality time with Yuna, and lamenting how good it would be for Yuna if she were a stay-at-home mommy. On one occasion, Yuna was going to have a ballet performance. Jaehee was excited to see her daughter perform, but on that same evening she was called to a mandatory assessment meeting on short notice and had no choice but to miss this precious event.

Case 2. High Workload and Work-Life Balance?

Jiyeon is a social worker working at a public senior welfare facility located in Seoul. She comes from a lower-middle-class family. Jiyeon chose her profession because she believed helping someone in need to be very rewarding.

She is required to work anywhere from an 11 to 12 hour shifts for three to four consecutive days with a day or two off after each set of consecutive days. Each floor of her four story workplace is fully packed with the elderly admitted to the facility, despite an insufficient number of staff needed to provide services at a satisfactory level. Making matters worse, working overtime is very common even though employees are not compensated for overtime work. Compared to other service industries the salary level of social workers is very low, and increasing workloads without any measures to address the staff shortage issue has resulted in a higher level of turnover. Even when she doesn't feel well, Jiyeon is always hesitant to take a day off because she doesn't want her colleagues to shoulder her work in her absence.

Besides the demanding work conditions, there have been several occasions where Jiyeon felt that her employer is not valuing or acknowledging her needs as a working mom. Last month, one of her colleagues Miso severely injured her back while helping elderly patient with moving his wheelchair, and needed to be hospitalized for two weeks. In Miso's absence, Jiyeon could overheard her other colleagues complain about their increased workload and even it was told by her supervisor that given a continuous absence, it may be difficult to keep her position. On another occasion, another colleague, Yunhee's young toddler came down with flu and needed to be taken to the doctor. In order to bring her child to the doctor for a two hour period and have a day off to take care of her sick baby, Yunhee skipped her lunch and persuaded her supervisor that she would make up those missed

hours by working the night-shift. Even though employees are entitled to use their annual leave for these purposes, many do not feel their use of those types of leave is welcomed by either their supervisor or their colleagues.

In this context, Jiyeon feels increasing levels of anxiety and overwhelming stress while worrying about her future career and work-life balance. Jiyeon got married last year and now she is expecting a new baby. Although she has a right to take maternity leave, she is scared to take it given the past situations with her colleagues. Because of the intense workload, taking maternity leave would shift her share of work to her colleagues who already feel overwhelmed with their own workloads. In addition, her job may not be secured for her to return to. She also believe that unpredictable work schedules would be a big obstacle.

Jiyeon has seen many friends struggle to balance work and life and eventually drop their career because of family responsibilities. It would be, however, difficult for Jiyeon to quit her job because it would be very challenging to finance her life with a new baby with her husband's single income. Jiyeon keeps going to work even though her due date is quickly approaching.

Suggestions for Improvement

What are the dilemmas and challenges that two working moms, Jaehee and Jiyeon have faced? The preceding sections suggest that the overall status of women's employment has improved and the government has made a series of efforts to help address past discrimination in employment practices against women and help them balance their work and life. However, it turns out that there are still obstacles to women's employment, career advancement, and more importantly their utilization of the work-life balance policies that exist. As illustrated in those two cases, making policy available cannot in

and of itself help materialize the proposed benefits of work-life balance policies. One of the major impediments might be the lack of supportive culture for successful implementation of work-life balance policies. Some prior studies address unique cultural norms that play a major role in shaping the attitude of managers and employees toward the use of work-life balance policies (Ryan & Kossek, 2008; Lee et al., 2011). Lee & his colleagues (2011) noted the cultural differences between South Korea and other Western countries such as the U.S.A. In South Korea as a collectivist society, rather than having work and life as a separate domain, work and family are interrelated and considered as an interdependent domain. Another distinctive cultural characteristic they suggest is Koreans' inclination to comply with in-group norms. For example, the culture of working long hours shapes in-group norms in which working long hours is viewed by colleagues and supervisors as a sign of loyalty to the employing organization and accountability for getting the job done even when the employee is aware that extended work hours would have negative impacts on work-life balance. The frequent use of flexible work schedule may conflict with this group norm, which would result in employees' hesitance to use it even when it is available. Another cultural characteristic is shaped by Confucian ideology that expects women to take exclusive responsibility for childcare and domestic work (Kim, 2007). As Kim (2007) noted, in this culture, working moms are usually not well-received as qualified workers and male workers who are willing to share domestic responsibilities with their partners are not well-received by their male colleagues. In order not to jeopardize their career advancement and secure their job or position, employees are encouraged to prioritize their work over their life or family needs. That is, in order to achieve the intended outcomes of work-life balance policies, there must be an inclusive culture in which different needs of individuals are recognized and respected and

also a family-friendly culture in which the use of work-life balance policies is encouraged and its value is well-received. It is not an easy task to change a deep-rooted culture.

It can begin with top leadership's commitment to promoting and managing diversity matters (Ricucci, 2002). Government workers and managers also need to be educated about bias or stereotypes they have when judging someone's work-related competence and qualifications and about how to overcome bias and stereotypes (Ricucci 2002; Choi & Park, 2014; Kim & Mullins, 2016). In implementing work-life balance policies, employees' perception of fairness and justice is critical to success. For this purpose, managers or supervisors need to be trained about how to fairly deliver this benefit to employees. They also need to communicate information on eligibility and available programs clearly. The use of programs should be encouraged when needed, and employers should ensure that there are no career disadvantages when using those programs. At the government level, rather than merely providing policies facilitating work-family balance by targeting working parents, it is recommended to develop and implement general work-life balance promoting programs that target anyone in the organization such as workplace health and wellness programs (e.g., nutrition services or health education).

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