

ORIGINALRESEARCH

The Impact of Leadership, Organizational Culture, and Occupational Stress on Work-Family Enrichment Among Korean Female Managers

El impacto del liderazgo, la cultura organizacional y el estrés laboral sobre el aprovechamiento óptimo trabajo-familia entre gerentes coreanas

Hwa-Mi Yang. Department of Nursing, Daejin University, Pocheon-si, Republic of Korea.
Email: parentled@naver.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8116-2188>

Hye-Ryoung Kim. College of Nursing, ShinHan University, Dongducheon-si, Republic of Korea.
Email: hrkim@shinhan.ac.kr, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7348-3061>

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Abstract

This study investigates the association between leadership, organizational culture, organizational stress, and work-family enrichment among Korean female managers. We obtained data of 1,325 female managers from the 7th Korean Women's Manager Panel Survey of 2017. We adopted multiple linear regression analysis for this study. We classified the data into two groups, young and middle-aged female managers. In both groups, high levels of leadership ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = 0.14$, $p < .001$ for middle-aged managers) and reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented organizational culture ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = 0.09$, $p = .041$ for middle-aged managers) were associated with higher levels of work-family enrichment and higher occupational stress with lower levels of work-family enrichment ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = -0.28$, $p < .001$ for middle-aged managers). This study suggests that improving leadership, supporting a reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented organizational culture, and reducing occupational stress are essential strategies to promote work-family enrichment for female managers. In addition, tailored approaches considering the different needs of young and middle-aged managers can further enhance these efforts, promoting a more inclusive and supportive workplace for all.

Keywords: Work-family enrichment; Organizational Culture; Leadership; Occupational Stress; Female; Manager

Resumen

Este estudio investiga la asociación entre el liderazgo, la cultura y el estrés organizacionales, con el enriquecimiento equilibrado trabajo-familia entre gerentes coreanas. Obtuvimos datos de 1,325 mujeres gerentes mediante la 7ª Encuesta del Panel de Mujeres Gerentes de Corea, 2017. Adoptamos un análisis de regresión lineal múltiple, clasificamos los datos en dos grupos: gerentes jóvenes y de mediana edad. En ambos grupos, los altos niveles de liderazgo ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$ para las jóvenes directivas; $\beta = 0.14$, $p < 0.001$, para las directivas de mediana edad) y una cultura organizacional razonable, igualitaria y orientada al rendimiento ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.001$ para las jóvenes directivas; $\beta = 0.09$, $p = 0.041$ para las directivas de mediana edad) se asociaron con mayores niveles de aprovechamiento trabajo-familia y un mayor estrés ocupacional con menores niveles ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.001$ para las jóvenes directivas; $\beta = -0.28$, $p < 0.001$ para las directivas de mediana edad). Este estudio sugiere que mejoras en el liderazgo, apoyo a una cultura organizacional razonable, igualitaria y orientada al rendimiento, así como la reducción del estrés laboral, son estrategias esenciales para promover un aprovechamiento saludable trabajo-familia para mujeres directivas. Además, la adopción de enfoques adaptados a las distintas necesidades de las directivas jóvenes y las de edad puede contribuir a potenciar estos esfuerzos, promoviendo un lugar de trabajo más integrativo y solidario para todas y todos.

Palabras clave: aprovechamiento trabajo-familia; cultura organizacional; liderazgo; estrés laboral; mujer; directiva



Introduction

Korea is known to have the most significant gender wage gap among OECD countries¹. Moreover, the patriarchal culture of working long hours in the labor market without supporting maternity and leave increases work-family conflict². The proportion of female managers in the European Union and the United Kingdom was 33.5~34.8%, while the proportion of female managers in Korea was as low as 16.5% in 2015^{3,4}, and 21.8% in 2022⁵.

Managerial positions require relatively higher abilities and responsibilities than general positions, and female managers face significant challenges in achieving work-family balance, by both caring for their families and demonstrating leadership in the workplace.

Work-family enrichment refers to the positive effects that experience in one domain, either work or family, has on the other⁶. Work-family enrichment is a critical factor in promoting health and well-being. By fostering positive experiences and interactions between the work and family domains, individuals can experience reduced stress⁷, improved sleep quality⁸, physical⁹, and psychological health⁷, enhanced work or family performance^{10, 11}, and greater happiness¹² and satisfaction⁷. Prioritizing work-family enrichment may lead to a healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle.

According to work-family enrichment theory, good leadership produces positive spillover effects on employees' work-family relationships, further improving family outcomes¹¹. Good leadership is reported as a protective factor¹³ in the relationship between stressors and predicting work-family enrichment¹⁴.

From an environmental point of view, an invisible, male-dominated organizational culture can be a barrier that prevents women from advancing to managers within the company. People often act according to perceived cultural beliefs and values rather than working according to their own personal beliefs and values¹⁵. The quality of organizational culture is linked to organizational performance and can affect the work-family domain. A traditional organizational culture strictly restricts individual

actions against collective values and may reduce work-family enrichment¹⁶.

Occupational stress is a reaction that occurs when people perceive a specific imbalance between the level of demand imposed on them and their ability to meet this demand¹⁷. Low occupational stress may be associated with work-family enrichment. According to a meta-analysis study, the main factors negatively associated with work-family enrichment were work-related characteristics such as long working hours, overload, job insecurity, and stressors in the workplace¹⁸. There may be differences in work experience, proficiency, leadership styles, and job stress between younger and middle-aged female managers. However, few studies have comprehensively explored how leadership, organizational culture, and occupational stress influence work-family enrichment in female managers, particularly considering age differences. This study aims to fill that gap by investigating these factors and their relationships.

Methods

Design and Participants

This cross-sectional correlation analysis study used data from 1,325 female managers who were employed at the time of the Korean Women Manager Panel Survey, conducted by the Korea Women's Development Institute. The survey, released in 2017 for academic purposes, provides valuable insights into the career development, organizational culture, leadership, and growth of female managers in Korea.¹⁹

Measures

Participant's general characteristics

We divided the group into young and middle-aged female managers, based on age 45²⁰.

Work-family enrichment

Work-family enrichment refers to the degree to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other and the degree to which work positively affects family life.²¹ The measurement of work-to-family enrichment consisted of three items

on a five-point Likert scale (1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree). "Working gives me satisfaction and vitality in life," "I feel I am more appreciated by my family members by working.", "My work makes my family life more satisfying." The score is the average of each item, ranging from 1 to 5 points, and a higher score indicates higher work-family enrichment. Cronbach's α was 0.77 in the previous study,²² and 0.84 in this study.

Leadership

Leadership consists of a total of 10 items on a five-point Likert scale. Leadership includes competencies in self-understanding, continuous learning, goal setting, decision-making and problem-solving, other organizational management skills, effective teamwork, communication skills, strategic thinking and behavior, building and maintaining relationships, and bringing out the capabilities of others. The score is calculated as the sum of each item and ranges from a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 50 points. A higher score indicates higher leadership. Cronbach's α in the previous study was 0.89,²³ and 0.87 in this study.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture measures the perception of the corporate culture. Organizational culture consists of a 12-item, five-point Likert scale. Organizational culture was classified into a reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented (RGP) and a rigid, work-oriented (RWO) culture. The RGP organizational culture includes questions such as "Our company's top management recognizes workers as human resources and trusts and respects them." In contrast, the RWO culture consists of items such as "It is noticeable that I take leave during the week due to personal reasons or housework at our organization." The scoring system is the average of each item and ranges from 1 to 5 points. In the previous²² and this study, Cronbach's α was 0.85 and 0.83 for rational performance-oriented culture and 0.84 and 0.80 for traditional organizational-oriented culture, consecutively.

Occupational stress

Occupational stress is scored as the sum of each item with 11 items on a five-point Likert scale consisting of low job autonomy, workload, competency mismatch, difficulties in relationships with colleagues, subordinates and superiors, performance-oriented competition, and long working hours. The score ranges from 11 to 55 points. Higher scores indicate high levels of stress. Cronbach's α in the previous study was 0.82,²⁴ and 0.79 in this study.

Ethical consideration

This study used secondary data from a panel of female managers in Korea. This data does not contain respondents' personal information and is publicly available. All information was anonymized and de-identified before analysis. We obtained written consent from the Institutional Review Board of Daejin University for this study (104065-202110-HR-01-16).

Statistical analysis

We performed all statistical analyses using the SPSS / WIN 23.0 program. We adopted multiple linear regression analysis on the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and job stress on female managers' work-family enrichment.

Results

Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants

We presented the sociodemographic characteristics of the participants in Table 1. Among the 1,325 female managers, 740 were young managers, and the average age was 40.1 years (range 27.0-44.0 years). On the other hand, there were 585 middle-aged managers with an average age of 49.0 (range 45.0-65.0 years). The average monthly wage of young female managers was 4.35 million Korean won, lower than that of middle-aged female managers, 4.88 million Korean won ($t = -5.49$, $p < .001$). The average working hours of young female managers were 54.4 hours per week, which was lower than that of middle-aged female

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of the participants (n=1,325)

Variables	Mean ± SD or n (%)		χ^2 or t/ Z	P
	Young adults (n=740)	Middle-aged (n=585)		
Age (year)	40.2 ± 2.95	49.0 ± 3.71	-47.03	<.001
Marital status				
Married	544 (73.5)	457 (78.1)	3.75	.053
Separated/divorced/widowed	196 (26.5)	128 (21.9)		
Education				
≥College graduates	579 (78.2)	448 (76.6)	0.52	.472
Monthly wage	435.6 ± 148.4	488.2 ± 181.2	-5.49	<.001
≥ 4,000,000 KW	455 (61.5)	437 (74.7)	25.93	<.001
Work hours per week	54.4 ± 9.12	56.2 ± 9.26	-3.59	<.001
Informal meeting, yes	186 (25.1)	210 (35.9)	18.06	<.001
Enterprise size (≥ 1,000 workers)	367 (49.6)	279 (47.7)	0.47	.492

SD: standard deviation; KW: Korean Won. Charts were done with the collected data.

Table 2. General characteristics of the participants (n=1,325)

Variables	Mean ± SD or N (%)		χ^2 or t/ Z	P
	Young adults (n=740)	Middle-aged (n=585)		
Work-family enrichment	3.9± 0.75	4.1± 0.70	-6.36	<.001
Leadership	34.8 ± 4.86	36.3 ± 5.06	-5.40	<.001
RGP organizational culture	3.1 ± 0.73	3.3 ± 0.69	-5.57	<.001
RWO organizational culture	2.8 ± 0.73	2.6± 0.78	4.40	<.001
Occupational stress	29.8 ± 6.00	29.0 ± 5.98	2.27	.024

SD: standard deviation; RGP: reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented; RWO: rigid, work-oriented

managers, 56.2 hours ($t = -3.59, p < .001$). There was no significant difference between the two groups in the size of companies ($\chi^2 = 0.47, p = .492$).

Work-Family Enrichment, Leadership, Organizational culture, and Occupational Stress

The average score of work-family enrichment was 3.85 points for young female managers, which was lower than 4.11 points for middle-aged female managers ($t = -6.36, p < .001$) (Table 2). The leadership score was 34.8 points for young female managers, lower than 36.3 points for middle-aged female managers ($t = -5.40, p < .001$). The average RGP organizational culture score was 3.1 for young female managers, lower than 3.3 for middle-aged female managers ($t = -5.07, p < .001$). On the other hand, the average score of RWO organizational culture was 2.8 for young female managers, higher

than 2.6 for middle-aged female managers ($t = 4.40, p < .001$). The average occupational stress score was also higher for young female managers, with 29.78 points, than for middle-aged female managers, with 29.03 points ($t = 2.27, p = .024$).

Crude linear regression relevant to work-family enrichment

Crude linear regression results showed that in the group of young female managers, age ($\beta = 0.03, p = .008$), marital status ($\beta = 0.09, p = .016$), monthly wage ($\beta = 0.10, p = .007$), and attending an informal meeting ($\beta = 0.11, p = .002$) were associated with work-family enrichment (Table 3). For middle-aged female managers, work-family enrichment was significantly higher when they were older ($\beta = 0.14, p = .001$) and married rather than divorced/separated or widowed ($\beta = 0.13, p = .001$), when monthly wage

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was 4 million won or more ($\beta = 0.09, p = .027$) when attending informal meetings ($\beta = 0.14, p = .001$), and when the company size was 1,000 workers or more ($\beta = 0.08, p = .049$).

Higher levels of leadership ($\beta = 0.34, p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = 0.26, p < .001$ for middle-aged managers) and RGP organizational culture ($\beta = 0.34, p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = 0.27, p < .001$ for middle-aged managers) were associated with a higher work-family enrichment in both young and middle-aged female managers. In contrast, RWO organizational culture ($\beta = -0.18, p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = -0.16, p < .001$ for middle-aged managers) and occupational stress ($\beta = -0.36,$

$p < .001$ for young managers; $\beta = -0.34, p < .001$ for middle-aged managers) were associated with lower work-family enrichment among young and middle-aged female managers.

Multiple linear regression relevant to work-to-family enrichment

Higher levels of leadership ($\beta = 0.22, p < .001$) and RGP organizational culture ($\beta = 0.16, p = .001$) were associated with work-family enrichment among young female managers. Meanwhile, a higher level of occupational stress level ($\beta = -0.22, p < .001$) was associated with a lower level of work-family enrichment among young female managers (Table

Table 3. Crude linear regression relevant to work-to-family enrichment (n=1,325)

Variables	β (SE), P-value			
	Young adults(n=740)		Middle-aged(n=585)	
Age (year)	0.10 (0.009)	.008	0.14 (0.008)	.001
Marital status (married)	0.09 (0.062)	.016	0.13 (0.221)	.001
Education (\geq College graduates)	0.03 (0.067)	.442	-0.05 (0.068)	.231
Monthly wage (\geq 4,000,000 Korean won)	0.10 (0.056)	.007	0.09 (0.066)	.027
Work hours per week	-0.01 (0.003)	.817	0.01 (0.001)	.827
Attending an informal meeting (yes)	0.11 (0.063)	.002	0.14 (0.060)	.001
Enterprise size (\geq 1,000 workers)	0.03 (0.055)	.411	0.08 (0.058)	.049
Leadership	0.34 (0.053)	<.001	0.26 (0.055)	<.001
RGP organizational culture	0.34 (0.036)	<.001	0.27 (0.040)	<.001
RWO organizational culture	-0.18 (0.037)	<.001	-0.16 (0.037)	<.001
Occupational stress	-0.36 (0.004)	<.001	-0.34 (0.005)	<.001

β : standardized beta; RGP: reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented; RWO: rigid, work-oriented

Table 4. Multiple linear regression relevant to work-family enrichment (n=1,325)

Variables	β (SE), P-value			
	Young adults(n=740)		Middle-aged(n=585)	
Age (year)	0.03 (0.009)	.409	0.10 (0.007)	.009
Marital status (married)	0.03 (0.057)	.326	0.10 (0.063)	.010
Education (\geq College graduates)	-0.06 (0.063)	.067	-0.08 (0.063)	.032
Monthly wage (\geq 4,000,000 Korean won)	0.02 (0.055)	.498	0.07 (0.061)	.062
Work hours per week	0.03 (0.003)	.398	0.05 (0.003)	.202
Attending an informal meeting (yes)	0.06 (0.058)	.085	0.10 (0.055)	.010
Enterprise size (\geq 1,000 workers)	-0.01 (0.052)	.761	0.01 (0.054)	.739
Leadership	0.22 (0.006)	<.001	0.14 (0.006)	<.001
RGP organizational culture	0.16 (0.039)	<.001	0.09 (0.044)	.041
RWO organizational culture	-0.02 (0.040)	.621	0.02 (0.039)	.619
Occupational stress	-0.22 (0.005)	<.001	-0.28 (0.005)	<.001

β : standardized beta; RGP: reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented; RWO: rigid, work-oriented

4). For middle-aged female managers, age ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = .009$), marital status ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = .010$), and attendance at informal meetings ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = .010$) still showed significant associations in the multiple linear regression analysis. High levels of leadership ($\beta = 0.14$, $p < .001$) and RGP organizational culture ($\beta = 0.09$, $p = .041$) were associated with higher work-family enrichment, whereas occupational stress was associated with lower work-family enrichment ($\beta = -0.28$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

This study investigated the associations between leadership, organizational culture, occupational stress, and work-family enrichment among Korean female managers. The findings highlight critical factors that can enhance or impede work-family enrichment, providing valuable insights for organizational policy and leadership practices.

The results demonstrate that high levels of leadership are associated with increased work-family enrichment among young and middle-aged female managers. This finding underscores the importance of effective leadership in facilitating the integration of work and family roles. Influential leaders who provide support, resources, and clear communication can help employees manage their work and family responsibilities more effectively, leading to more abundant work-family enrichment¹¹. Effective leadership likely fosters a supportive and empowering work environment, enabling female managers to manage better and integrate their professional and personal lives. It aligns with previous research suggesting that supportive leadership can reduce work-family conflict and promote enrichment by providing resources and creating a positive organizational climate.²⁵

Cultures reflect gender roles and expectations for behavior.²⁶ Korean organizational culture is rooted in a hierarchical closed system with rigid patriarchal culture.^{27,28} A supportive organizational culture values participation, collaboration, egalitarianism, and interpersonal relationships, and it respects workers.²⁹ Vanmuller and Hondeghem³⁰ reported that organizational factors

other than leadership style are even more critical and influential for young workers. This study also highlights the importance of a reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented organizational culture. Such a culture promotes fairness, acknowledges performance, and supports work-life balance, making it easier for female managers to experience positive spillover between work and family roles. Interestingly, young female managers particularly benefit from a rational organizational culture, underscoring the need for organizations to cultivate inclusive and supportive environments for younger employees. In contrast, a rigid work-oriented organizational culture had a negative association with work-family enrichment. This culture may impose high demands and inflexibility, exacerbating work-family conflict and hindering enrichment. These findings underscore the critical role of organizational culture in shaping work-life dynamics and the importance of fostering cultures that support gender equality and performance without undue rigidity.

Occupational stress emerged as a detrimental factor for work-family enrichment across both age groups. Higher levels of occupational stress were significantly associated with lower work-family enrichment. This negative association highlights the importance of addressing occupational stress to promote a healthier work-life balance for female managers. This result is consistent with existing literature suggesting that stress at work can spill over into family life, reducing the positive interactions between work and family domains.³¹ Occupational stress can diminish the energy and resources available to manage family responsibilities, hindering work-family enrichment.

The study result reveals age-related differences in the factors associated with work-family enrichment. For young female managers, leadership and reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented organizational culture are crucial, highlighting the need for young managers to have supportive leaders and a fair organizational environment to achieve work-family enrichment. On the other hand, for middle-aged female managers, personal factors such as age, marital status, and participation in informal meetings also play significant roles. This

fact suggests that as female managers age, their personal and social networks become more influential in managing work-family balance.

Implications and recommendations

Our findings suggest several practical implications for organizations supporting female managers' work-family enrichment.

Firstly, enhancing leadership quality and cultivating supportive, gender-equal, and performance-oriented organizational cultures are crucial. Organizations should invest in leadership development programs and promote inclusive practices that recognize and reward performance fairly. Training programs that develop leadership skills and promote support, empathy, and effective communication may enhance work-family enrichment. Policies promoting work-life balance, such as flexible working hours and family-friendly practices, may create a reasonable, gender-equal, performance-oriented culture.

Secondly, reducing occupational stress through targeted interventions and supportive policies can improve work-family enrichment. These interventions could include implementing flexible work arrangements, providing access to stress management resources, and fostering a supportive organizational climate.

Lastly, Recognizing the different needs of young and middle-aged female managers can help design tailored interventions. For younger managers, focusing on leadership and organizational culture may be more beneficial, while for middle-aged managers, providing opportunities for informal networking and acknowledging personal factors can be more effective.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine the causal relationships between leadership, organizational culture, occupational stress, and work-family enrichment. Second, the

study is based on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases. Future studies could incorporate objective organizational culture and stress measures to validate the findings. Finally, the study focuses on Korean female managers, and the results may not be generalizable to other cultural contexts. Comparative studies across different cultures could provide a more comprehensive understanding of these associations.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing work-family enrichment among Korean female managers. Effective leadership, supportive organizational culture, and reduced occupational stress are vital elements promoting work-family enrichment. By addressing these factors, organizations can better support their female managers, contributing to their overall well-being and productivity. Tailored approaches considering the different needs of young and middle-aged managers can further enhance these efforts, promoting a more inclusive and supportive workplace for all.

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