Consequences of Submissive Loyalty Corporations: An Empirical Analysis of Korean Female Employees' Perception*

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Abstract: The number of female employees in the Korean workforce has risen. However, the Korean corporate climate, characterized by collectivism, hierarchism, and senior and masculine privilege, leads them to experience work-life conflict and even halt their careers. This climate stems from a social and organizational culture deeply rooted in traditional Confucianism. In Korea, where housework and childcare have long been considered the province of women, female employees find it more difficult to balance office work and family life. The Korean corporate climate welcomes overtime work, and women who work outside the home must juggle this and family responsibilities. We conceptualize behavior such as acquiescing to overtime work as submissive loyalty and elucidate work-family conflict and decreasing job and life satisfaction as consequences thereof. The analysis, based on a structural equation model, revealed that submissive loyalty increases work-family conflict, which decreases job and life satisfaction.

Keywords: submissive loyalty, work-life balance, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, Confucianism

INTRODUCTION

Korean women are increasingly offered more economic, social, and educational opportunities. However, one out of five Korean female workers quit their jobs to take up traditional women's tasks such as childcare and housework (Yoon, 2016).

They leave their workplaces because of a fear that they will not be able to balance work and family spheres. The Korean government regards this phenomenon as unfortunate for both individuals and the country and supports various work-family balance programs including maternity leave, parental leave, and flextime options (Baek, Kelly, & Jang, 2012; S. Kim, 2008; S. S. Lee, 2009; Patterson & Bae, 2013). Despite these formal arrangements, a considerable portion of female workers still experience work-family conflict and eventually quit their jobs.

Many studies attribute work-family conflict and career breaks to the unique organizational culture in Korea (e.g., S. Kim, 2008; Lee, Chang, & Kim, 2011; Patterson & Bae, 2013; Yoo, 2008). The background to this culture is Confucianism, which has a long history in the country and instilled the values of collectivism, organizational order, personal sacrifice, seniority privilege, masculine privilege, and occupational discrimination (Park & Han, 2018; Sung, 2003). Confucianism, which supports collectivism, patriarchy, and hierarchy, undermines the merit system, because on this worldview individuals are not to be rewarded for their effective performance of organizational tasks but for their commitment to Confucian values. This culture has detrimental effects on individuals and the country. Among the OECD countries, Korea has the longest working hours, which are not proportionate to national productivity, and the lowest quality of life level (see http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/korea).[1]

The detrimental effects such a culture is more serious for the Korean female workforce. The Confucianism-based traditional culture poses more difficulties for female employees, because it pressures women to both commit to organizational Confucian values and to assume family responsibilities. A white paper by the Seoul Foundation of Women and Family reported that Korean women in relationships with men where both partners earn paychecks spend 3.5 times more hours doing housework than men (Park, 2016). In light of these pressures, female employees feel forced to choose between work and family. Corporate personnel practices may exacerbate the glass ceiling, because most organizations, especially for-profits, prefer employees that can work longer over those that can only work regular hours because of family responsibilities. Korean corporate culture considers the former (who are made up of men) to be more competent, and a high proportion of women unwillingly belong to the latter category.

There has been little research aimed at tackling the relationship between female

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1. Mexico has the longest working hours among the 35 OECD countries, followed by South Korea. In addition, the work-life balance level of South Korea is the fourth worst among 35 OECD member countries.

employees' perceptions of the work-life conflict and their self-reported satisfaction with work and life s and the characteristics of the Korean corporate culture. This study aims to fill this research gap. To this end, we characterize and conceptualize the distinctive Korean corporate climate as one of submissive loyalty on the grounds that the organizational behaviors of female employees are of the sort that suggest loyalty to their organization, which means unresistingly or humbly yielding to its authority. Based on this conceptualization, we raise the following questions pertinent to the job-related perceptions of Korean female employees.

- Does the submissive loyalty of Korean female employees to their organization increase work-family conflict?

- Does the submissive loyalty of Korean female employees to their organization decrease work satisfaction and life satisfaction?

- How does the work-family conflict that Korean female employees deal with influence the relationship between submissive loyalty and work and life satisfaction?

This article consists of six sections including the introduction. The second section conceptualizes submissive loyalty as a pervasive feature of Korean corporate culture and reviews the literature related to work-life balance, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction. The third section describes the data and variables, and the fourth reports the results of the analysis. The fifth section provides theoretical and practical implications, and the final section offers concluding remarks.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Submissive Loyalty as a Characteristic Feature of the Korean Workplace Climate

Conceptually, organizational culture comprises norms, values, behavioral patterns, and traditions that organizational members collectively share or generally accept (Heskett & Kotter, 1992; Schein, 1985). The culture is central to defining their behaviors and mindsets (Ivancevich, Matteson, & Konopaske, 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Cultural differences become conspicuous with dyadic contrasts such as developed versus developing economies, Westernized/modernized versus

nonmodernized civilizations, and democratic versus authoritative regimes. Scholars suggest typologies of organizational culture based on these contrasts: for example, individualism versus collectivism (Goncalo & Staw, 2006; Moorman & Blakely, 1995; Triandis, 1995), feminism versus patriarchy (Allen, 1999; Butler, 1978; Eisenstein, 1977), and Protestantism versus Confucianism (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Lim & Lay, 2003; Weber, 1930). One element or the other of these contrasts may be identified as a defining the organizational culture characterizing a country. Organizational cultures within a nation may share many characteristics, although it is difficult to ascertain the homogeneity of the organizational cultures of numerous entities.

The organizational culture of the country has long adhered to the collectivism and hierarchy rooted in Confucianism (Oh, Min, Kim, et al., 2017). According to the Hofstede Center (https://geert-hofstede.com/), Korea scores above the median for the cultural dimensions of collectivism (versus individualism) and acceptance of unequal power distribution. Notably, Korea earned 18 out of 100 points for individualism (86th among the 102 countries surveyed). The prevalence of Confucian values (patriarchy, collectivism, hierarchy, and privilege for men, superiors, and seniors) has created a unique Korean organizational workplace culture. This culture generates an organizational climate grounded in "employees' shared perceptions of organizational events, practices, and procedures" (Patterson, West, Shackleton, et al., 2005, p. 380). We term this unique Korean corporate climate "submissive loyalty." Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual background of submissive loyalty—social culture, organizational culture, and corporate climate.

Figure 1. Conceptual Background of Submissive Loyalty
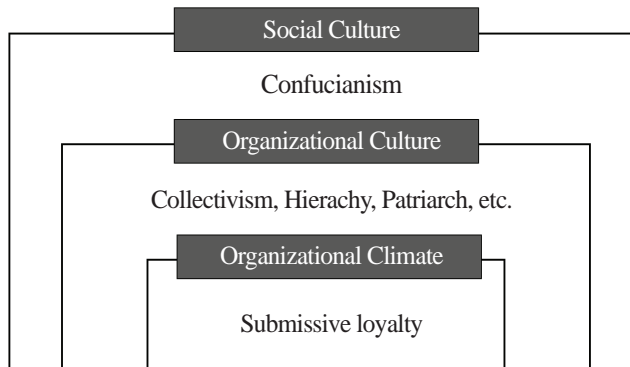
Many believe that the corporate climate in Korea forces employees to unconditionally sacrifice themselves and devote their energy (that they would devote to their families and themselves) to the workplace. The workforce climate prioritizes work over personal life and compulsory participation in extra (not necessarily task-related) activities outside the physical workplace (Yoo, 2008, p. 2). Korean culture, which emphasizes kinship-based bonding and hierarchical order in human relations either tacitly or explicitly, requires all subordinates to participate in staff dinners, for example. The length of time spent at a workplace can determine rewards and the outcome of work evaluations to a similar extent as job performance. Much research has reported job stress and burnout due to the demands of this kind of corporate climate (Burke, 1999; Gifford, Zammuto, Goodman, et al. 2002; Wharton & Blair-Loy, 2002).

This climate is especially disadvantageous for female employees, who are traditionally expected to perform more family duties (Burke, 1999; Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Rutherford, 2001). Men, who are less burdened in terms of housework and childcare, can stay late at their workplaces to work overtime, and this cycle in turn may strengthen the organizational culture of prioritizing work over other matters. In this climate, voluntarily working overtime is considered a way to show loyalty to superiors and organizations, and workers who leave the office on time end up feeling isolated (Choi, 2016; Kelly, Ammons, Chermack, et al. 2010). Many female employees who cannot work long hours are eventually excluded from participating in core projects and are seen as having low organizational loyalty (Collinson & Hearn, 1994; Rutherford, 2001).

These women experience challenges in breaking through the glass ceiling unless they prioritize work. Women experiencing work-family conflict may have the option of working flexible hours or taking time off, but taking advantage of this option may hurt them in terms of promotions and other organizational opportunities (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). In reality, organizations, especially private corporations, tend to rule out from promotion employees who do not often work extra hours owing to family responsibilities. Such employees are considered less committed to the organization than those are willing to work at any time (Blair-Loy, 2001).

The results of the Korean Organizational Culture Survey conducted by Job Korea (the largest online job-hunting site in Korea) in June 2015 revealed that male and female Korean workers' negative perceptions of the work environment emerge from their experiences: 35% of those surveyed pointed to an atmosphere that takes nighttime work for granted, 24% to a collectivism that forces unity in every matter, 23% to no freedom to take a day off, 22% to a lack of personal privacy, 15% to a

hierarchical culture that makes it difficult to argue with superiors, and 12% to a patriarchal culture that demands personal sacrifice. These responses reveal the characteristics of Korean corporate work practices that lead to negative consequences such as decreased motivation, turnover intention, dissatisfaction, burnout, and career abandonment (N. H. Kim, 2011, p. 87; Park, Min, Chang, et al., 2009; Yoo, 2008, p. 2).

According to Albert Hirschman (1970), there are three options for individuals working for any organization: exit, voice, or loyalty. He argues that loyalty increases the voice of resistance to policies individuals disagree with and reduces exiting when an organization moves in the wrong direction. Higher loyalty increases job satisfaction, morale, and productivity (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p. 716). While Hirschman considers loyalty to be positive and constructive, there are nuances of loyalty that can be distinguished according to worker sentiments. Furthermore, certain populations may feel boxed in and only capable of choose one of the three options. Many Korean female workers, for example, must select loyalty to survive and retain their jobs.

The unique type of loyalty characterizing Korean workplaces is what we describe as submissive, which means "unresistingly or humbly obedient" per the lexicographic definition. The term "submissive loyalty" is intended to capture the negative aspect of loyalty. The submissive forced loyalty of female Korean employees who need to go home after regular working hours does not boost their organizational commitment related to job and work satisfaction and so differs from Hirschman's understanding of loyalty as a voluntary emotional attachment or devotion (Choi, 2016; Yoon, 2010). The Hofstede Center may have identified Korea as a collectivist state, but submissive loyalty is not congruent with general collectivism, which seeks to achieve a common goal through joint efforts and collaboration (Earley, 1993). Collectivism does not legitimate forced loyalty, and the paramount status of the group in conflicts between its own and personal interests does not imply the sacrificing of individual or family life (Triandis, 1994).

Submissive loyalty as a feature of a corporate climate that emerges out of traditional Korean culture is more prevalent in private firms than in public and nonprofit entities (Kim, Oh, & Park, 2015). Public sector agencies must follow guidelines to facilitate work-family compatibility; however, these guidelines are merely recommendations to many for-profit entities. Difficulties to female employees face in this climate include a tacit pressure to work extra hours, participation in after-work gatherings, and hindering them in their requests for days off and vacation.

Job Satisfaction and Life Satisfaction

Job satisfaction refers to "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). Indicating individuals' feelings about their job, it can contribute to organizational performance and clarify negative behaviors such as delinquency and turnover (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Hackett & Guion, 1985). Therefore, organizations tend to expend time and effort on increasing job satisfaction. We offer a comprehensive view of job satisfaction that encompasses external (e.g., wages and promotion) and internal factors (e.g., relationships with coworkers and superiors).

Many studies consider job satisfaction to be dependent on a positive organizational culture and organizational climate, good leadership, and work-family balance (e.g., Bogler, 2001; Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; Lok & Crawford, 2004; Pritchard & Karasick, 1973). Individuals regard job satisfaction as an important criterion for evaluating their quality of life, because being satisfied with their job gives them a sense of accomplishment. Dissatisfaction with a job compromises mental and physical health, leading to a diminishing quality of life. Studies report that organizations with high job satisfaction demonstrate good performance and effectiveness (e.g., Halkos & Bousinakis, 2010; Williams & Anderson, 1991; Zeinabadi, 2010).

On the other hand, life satisfaction refers to "a positive evaluation of the conditions of your life, a judgement that, at least on balance, it measures up favorably against your standards or expectations" (Sumner, 1996, p. 145). Reflecting subjective well-being and happiness, life satisfaction is understood to be a conscious and cognitive judgment of the condition of one's life based on one's personal standards (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, et al. 1985; Diener, Napa-Scollon, Oishi, et al. 2000). In addition, life satisfaction is determined by the nature of one's family and work lives and by one's individual characteristics (Prasoon & Chaturvedi, 2016, p. 26). We define life satisfaction as an individual's subjective values regarding family and relationships.

Work-Family Conflict

Jeffrey Greenhaus and Nicholas Beutell describe work-family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (1985, p. 76). In many countries, the work-family conflict has become a new axis of welfare. Korea is no exception in terms of the new attention being given to work-family conflict. Given

its nature (who experiences conflict more?), work-life conflict is often approached in terms of the perceptions of female employees. Despite great strides made in women's independence over the last hundred years, work-family conflicts still force women to take a break in their careers or postpone having children. Not only does work-family conflict negatively affect the quality of family life but it also makes it difficult for women to perform their family roles (childcare and house-work) (Higgins, Duxbury, & Irving, 1992; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983; Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985). Work-family conflict negatively affects marital life and relationships with other family members, and decreases satisfaction with work and life (Burke, 1988; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kopelman et al., 1983).

Work-family conflict has two aspects (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996): work interference with family (WIF) and family interference with work (FIW). WIF and FIW are associated with such job-related factors as turnover intention, organizational commitment, and job burnout) and with such life-related factors as quality of life; however, WIF is more related to job-related factors than is FIW (Byron, 2005; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, et al., 2015). The influences of WIF and FIW vary with gender and the number of children (Boyar, Maertz, & Pearson, 2005; Byron, 2005).

Theories and Hypotheses

Three theories explain the relationships between the variables in this study. We postulated the hypotheses based on these theories.

First, role conflict theory explores what happens when an individual is asked to play roles that contradict one another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). As figure 2 shows, these conflicts can be time-based, strain-based, or behavior-based. Time-based conflict occurs when time allotted to one sphere (job or family) decreases the amount of time one can devote to another sphere. Strain-based conflict occurs when stress or tension resulting from role ambiguity or role burden in one sphere negatively affects the other sphere. Behavior-based conflict occurs when habits or expectations required to fulfill a role in the one sphere do not correspond to com-pleting a role in the other. Submissive loyalty may induce conflicts based on time, strain, and the behavior of female employees, decreasing their job satisfaction or organizational commitment.

Figure 2. Work-Family Role Pressure Incompatibility
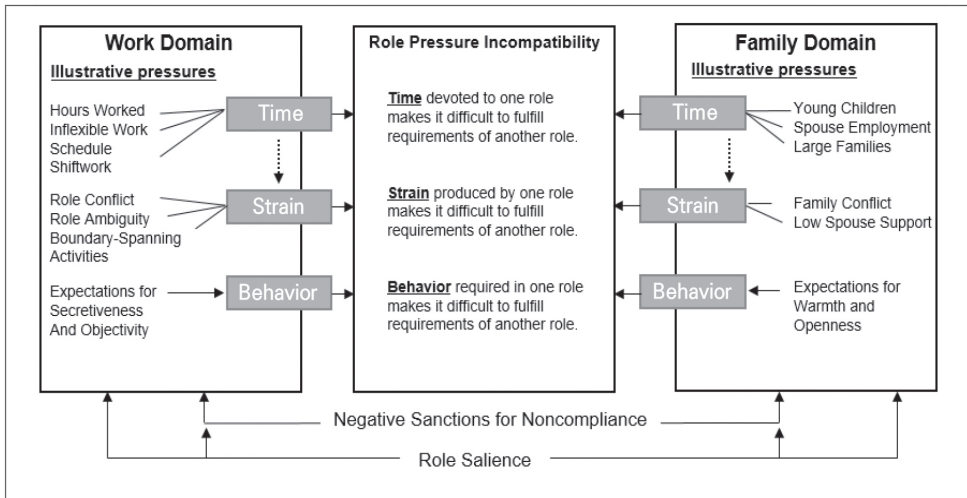
Source: Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 78

Second, the conservation of resources theory argues that individuals seek to acquire and retain resources and feel threatened when they are in danger of losing them (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989). Spending all of one's personal resources (time, physical, and mental energy) in one sphere makes it difficult for one to perform roles in the other sphere, causes stress, and worsens work-family conflict. Failure to balance the distribution of limited resources between work and home depletes one's energies, increases stress, and produces negative feelings (Goode, 1960).

Finally, the spillover theory contends that emotions arising from home and work affect how one performs in each domain (Champoux, 1978; Small & Riley, 1990; Staines, 1980). One cannot concentrate on work when one is dealing with negative feelings about home or perform roles at home when one is experiencing work-related stress (Eby, Maher, & Butts, 2010). The negative feelings due to interference from work or home can shift to other life domains. Work-family conflict transfers negative feelings from work to the family and from family to work, reducing job and life satisfaction. Table 1 provides the hypotheses based on the preceding discussion.

Table 1. Hypotheses

H1: Submissive loyalty increases work-family conflicts.
H1a: Submissive loyalty increases work interference with family.
H1b: Submissive loyalty increases family interference with work.

H2: Work-family conflicts reduce job and life satisfaction.
H2a: Work interference with family reduces job satisfaction.
H2b: Work interference with family reduces life satisfaction.
H2c: Family interference with work reduces job satisfaction.
H2d: Family interference with work reduces life satisfaction.

H3: Submissive loyalty reduces job and life satisfaction.
H3a: Submissive loyalty reduces job satisfaction.
H3b: Submissive loyalty reduces life satisfaction.

H4: Work-family conflicts mediate the influence of submissive loyalty on job and life satisfaction.
H4a: Work interference with family mediates the influence of submissive loyalty on job satisfaction.
H4b: Work interference with family mediates the influence of submissive loyalty on life satisfaction.
H4c: Family interference with work mediates the influence of submissive loyalty on job satisfaction.
H4d: Family interference with work mediates the influence of submissive loyalty on life satisfaction.

DATA AND METHOD

Data

We used the 2016 Korean Women Manager Panel survey data from the Korean Women's Development Institute. The survey included questions related to career development, promotional opportunities for managers, workplace conditions, and work-family balance in the female Korean workforce. We extracted data on 994 married female employees in their 30s, 40s, and 50s from the original dataset (number of survey respondents = 1,627), excluding the data on panelists with missing values. We selected these respondents because married women in the age range are usually more exposed to work-family conflict than nonmarried women and those younger or older. Table 2 describes the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents.

Table 2. Sample Distribution (N=994)

	Categories	Percentage
Age	[1] 30–39	40%
	[2] 40–49	53%
	[3] 50–59	7%
Education	[1] high school	9%
	[2] some college	15%
	[3] bachelor's degree	56%
	[4] master's degree	18%
	[5] doctorate	1%
Length of Service	[1] 10 years or less	12%
	[2] 11–20 years	52%
	[3] 21–30 years	32%
	[4] 31–40 years	4%
Size of the Organization	[1] Less than 100 employees	4%
	[2] 100–299 employees	19%
	[3] 300–999 employees	28%
	[4] 1,000–1,999 employees	14%
	[5] 2,000 employees or more	35%

Note: Coded values are indicated in square brackets.

Measurements

Table 3 lists the items included in the original survey questionnaire and results of the validity and reliability test, which combined the items into common factors. A principal common component of the five items characterizing the Korean workforce climate was identified as the latent variable of submissive loyalty. Work-family conflict was categorized as WIF and FIW depending on the source of conflict. WIF and FIW forms a common factor of the four items in table 3. Job satisfaction combines the six items reflecting satisfaction with different targets. Life satisfaction is a common factor of satisfaction with personal, family, and life in general. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha test to confirm the validity and reliability of measurements. The results of the exploratory factor analysis support the validity of all measurement items. Cronbach's alpha values, all of which exceed the cutoff (0.7), support reliability.

In addition, we conducted the Harman (1976) single factor test to assess the extent of common methods bias. The single factor test is widely used to verify this bias. The factor generated in the exploratory factor analysis has a variance of 26.83%, which is lower than the limit of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, the test statistically supports the absence of this bias.

Table 3. Survey Items

Factor	Items	Mean	Loadings	Eigenvalue	Alpha
Submissive Loyalty	I am nervous when I leave work on time.	2.97	.75	2.67	.78
	My company makes it difficult to take days off to take care of personal affairs or housework.	2.51	.66		
	Working overtime is one way to obtain a good evaluation in my company.	2.79	.76		
	I feel it will be difficult for me to survive unless I prioritize work over any other activity.	3.21	.60		
	I feel anxious when I do not attend team/ unit gatherings or dinners after work.	3.16	.76		
WIF	My long working hours interfere with my family life.	3.25	.76	2.52	.81
	Stress from work encroaches on my life outside the office.	3.14	.72		
	I often feel exhausted because of work.	3.23	.76		
	My irregular working hours make a good family life difficult.	2.52	.78		
FIW	It is often difficult to work collaboratively, because of the burden of childcare.	3.56	.76	2.38	.76
	It is difficult to be successful at my company owing to my housework responsibilities at home.	2.86	.78		
	I have thought about quitting work because of my family life.	3.14	.75		
	Time for family life keeps me from participating in career development activities at work.	2.62	.69		
Job Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my coworkers.	3.80	.73	3.77	.82
	I am satisfied with my wages.	3.41	.66		
	I am satisfied with my direct supervisors.	3.54	.72		
	I am satisfied with my tasks.	3.68	.76		
	I am satisfied with my working environment.	3.62	.79		
	I am satisfied with my working hours.	3.51	.64		
Life Satisfaction	I am satisfied with my personal life.	3.26	.84	1.77	.85
	I am satisfied with my family life.	3.66	.88		
	I am satisfied with my life.	3.57	.89		

Based on our exploratory factor analysis results, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to test validity of each construct. The model fit output showed that entire model is within acceptable levels.[2]

Method

A path analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses postulated through the research framework (path diagram) and estimate path coefficients. For the path analysis, we conducted an estimation based on structural equation modeling to obtain multiple indicators of the path model fit. We hypothesized that WIF and FIW mediate the impact of submissive loyalty on job and life satisfaction. The Sobel test validated the mediating effect of WIF and FIW.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section reports the results of the analysis in terms of correlation, structural modeling, and the mediating effects test.

Correlation

Table 4 provides the Pearson's correlation coefficients. Submissive loyalty is positively correlated with WIF and FIW; that is, there is an association between submissive loyalty and the perception of work-life conflict. As expected, submissive loyalty is negatively correlated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction. WIF and FIW are positively correlated, as are job satisfaction and life satisfaction. In addition, WIF and FIW are negatively correlated with job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

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2. To examine the overall model fit, the following fit indices were used: root mean square error of approximation (=.045), comparative fit index (= .951), incremental fit index (= .951), Turker-Lewis index (= .941), and goodness of fit index (= .954).

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics and Pairwise Correlation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	[A]	[B]	[C]	[D]	[E]	[F]	[G]	[H]
[A] Submissive Loyalty	2.93	0.78								
[B] WIF	3.04	0.82	.43*							
[C] FIW	3.05	0.81	.24*	.42*						
[D] Job Satisfaction	3.60	0.59	−.26*	−.33*	−.20*					
[E] Life Satisfaction	3.49	0.71	−.18*	−.33*	−.40*	.34*				
[F] Age	41	4.98	−.12*	−.04	−.20*	.03	.15*			
[G] Length of Service	17	6.70	−.06*	−.01	−.10*	.07*	.10*	.53*		
[H] Size of Organization	2.55	1.26	.15*	.14*	.02	.12*	.08*	.03	.19*	
[I] Education	2.87	0.86	.073*	.108*	.054	.01	.02	.01	−.13*	.11*

Note: * $p < 0.01$.
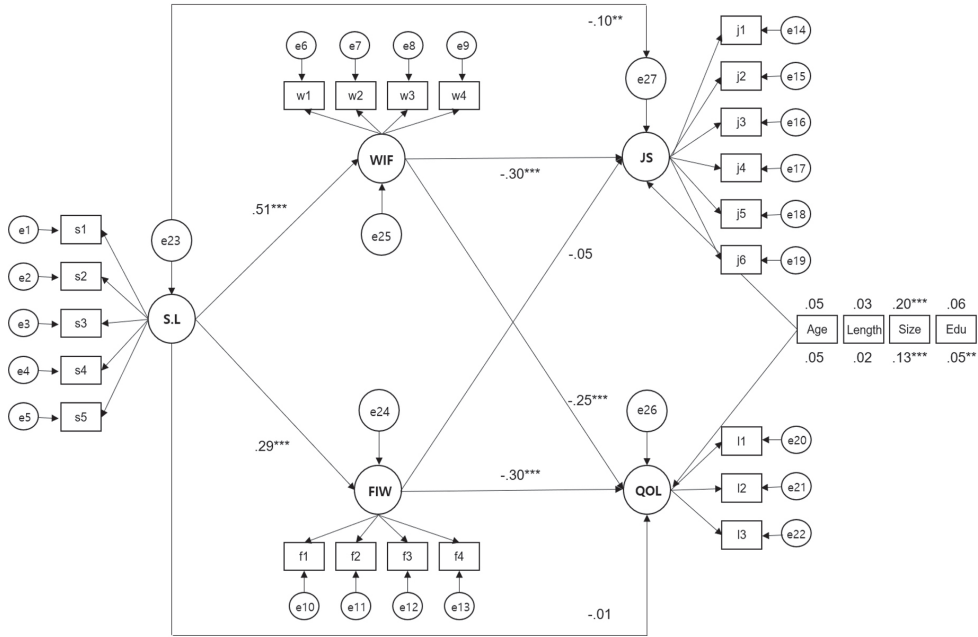
Structural Equation Model

The model has an overall good fit in terms of various indicators. All indicators meet the criteria for goodness of fit. Figure 3 diagrams the structural path with estimated coefficients, and table 5 shows the specific result of the structural equation model analysis and whether our hypotheses are supported or not. Table 6 describes the direct, indirect, and total effects in terms of standardized coefficients.

Table 5. Regression Estimates

Hypothesis		Unstandardized Estimates	t value	Result
H1a	Submissive loyalty → WIF	.490 (.042)	11.669**	Supported
H1b	Submissive loyalty → FIW	.295 (.040)	7.429**	Supported
H2a	WIF → job satisfaction	−.188 (.034)	−5.471**	Supported
H2b	WIF → life satisfaction	−.248 (.047)	−5.258**	Supported
H2c	FIW → job satisfaction	−.034 (.027)	−1.250	Rejected
H2d	FIW→ life satisfaction	−.285 (.040)	−7.059**	Supported
H3a	Submissive loyalty → job satisfaction	−.063 (.026)	−2.408*	Supported
H3b	Submissive loyalty → life satisfaction	−.017 (.036)	−.458	Rejected

Notes: *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$; standard errors in parentheses. Goodness of fit index = 0.92, adjusted goodness of fit index = 0.90, comparative fit index = 0.92, incremental fit index = 0.92, Turker-Lewis index = 0.90, root mean square residual = 0.048, and root mean square error of approximation = 0.052.

Figure 3. Structural Equation Model

Notes: **: *p* < .05, ***: *p* < .001.The structural path estimates indicate standardized regression weights.

The results of the structural equation modeling indicate that submissive loyalty magnifies work-family conflict as well as WIF and FIW. This finding strongly indicates that Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) role conflict theory can be applied to the spheres of work and life. Organizational behavior studies emphasize the impact of organizational culture and climate on behaviors, values, and norms (Ivancevich et al., 1990; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Pritchard & Karasick, 1973). In climates that prioritize organizational commitment over personal life, female employees feel obligated to spend more mental and physical energy at work and thus find it difficult to balance work and family. This study confirms that submissive loyalty has a greater effect on WIF than FIW. Submissive loyalty, forcing female employees to spend more time at work, keeps them from performing their roles at home, leading to WIF that arises from role conflict.

While WIF decreases job and life satisfaction, the influence of FIW is partly significant. FIW decreases life satisfaction, but does not significantly influence job satisfaction. This result is understandable in the Korean context. Korean employees tend to prioritize work over life. If housework interferes with office work, many

feel ashamed and embarrassed. Thus, employees block the influence of FIW on job satisfaction.

Regarding direct effects, submissive loyalty decreases job satisfaction but does not significantly affect life satisfaction. In summary, the analysis supports H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, H2d, and H3a but not H2c and H3b.

Table 6. Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Model		Standardized Estimates		
		Submissive Loyalty	WIF	FIW
WIF	direct	.510		
	indirect			
	total	.510		
FIW	direct	.297		
	indirect			
	total	.297		
Job Satisfaction	direct	−.109	−.309	−.058
	indirect	−.175		
	Total	−.284	−.309	−.058
Life Satisfaction	direct	−.018	−.257	−.306
	indirect	−.222		
	total	−.240	−.257	−.306

Mediation Effects

We conducted the Sobel test to confirm the significance of the hypothetical mediating effects. Table 7 presents the results. The test confirms that both WIF and FIW mediate submissive loyalty and life satisfaction. The results of the structural equation modeling indicate that submissive loyalty does not directly impact life satisfaction; however, submissive loyalty decreases life satisfaction through FIW. While FIW does not significantly mediate the impact of submissive loyalty on job satisfaction, WIF mediates submissive loyalty and job satisfaction. Despite the insignificance of the direct influence of FIW on job satisfaction, FIW significantly decreases life satisfaction and mediates submissive loyalty and life satisfaction. The results of the Sobel test thus support H4a, H4b, and H4c but not H4c.

Table 7. Sobel Test

	Hypothetical Paths	*t* statistics	Mediation
H4a	Submissive loyalty → WIF → job satisfaction	4.996*	Supported
H4b	Submissive loyalty → WIF → life satisfaction	−4.807*	Supported
H4c	Submissive loyalty → FIW → job satisfaction	−1.241	Rejected
H4d	Submissive loyalty → FIW → life satisfaction	−5.124*	Supported

Note: * p < 0.01.

DISCUSSION

Research Implications

This study makes conceptual and theoretical contributions to the extant research. First, we have proposed the concept of submissive loyalty to capture the workplace culture and climate in Korea and East Asia, known to respect Confucian values. Submissive loyalty adds a new dimension to organizational members' behavioral and decisional options—exit, loyalty, or voice. Many individuals and corporations in Korea are aware of the problems stemming from submissive loyalty. However, no study has tried to label and conceptualize a prototype of the Korean corporate culture or climate. Similarly, efforts to systematically examine its impact on female perceptions regarding work and life are lacking. This study makes unique contributions in terms of this conceptualization and modeling.

Second, we have investigated the congruence among fundamental theories exploring work-life balance and conflict in the context of the female Korean workforce. Korean corporate culture differs from theoretical categorizations of organizational culture. This study clarifies this unique corporate culture—submissive loyalty—characterized by collectivism, hierarchy, and Confucianism by examining the interrelationships between perceptions, determinants, and expected consequences of work-life balance and conflict.

Finally, the findings of this study advance a feminist perspective by exploring submissive loyalty. We do not directly address women's rights in the workplace, but our findings highlight gender equality in terms of work-life balance. Further comparative studies of male and female loyalty to organizations can elaborate on the workplace gender inequality hinted at in this study.

Practical Lessons

The role of the government is important in enforcing policies and directions that support work-life balance. The Korean government has made efforts to transform the organizational culture generating work-family conflict (Moon, K. M., & Lim, 2009; Chin et al, 2012). For example, in 2017, the Ministry of Employment and Labor announced the Ten Proposals for Work Innovation (including leaving the office on time, not making phone calls related to work after working hours, flexible work policies, and the freedom to request days off and vacation), encouraging public agencies to support work-life balance. The public sector may have an environment that is more amenable to the execution of these policies than the private sector. Korean government–driven campaigns have not been effective in improving organizational culture in private corporations. Nevertheless, the Korean government should encourage, empower, and motivate organizations to nurture family-friendly organizational cultures. Corporations should consider the cost that nighttime work imposes on society as a whole. Corporate executives think that family-friendly policies lead to an immediate loss of productivity. However, forcing employees to work extra hours to increase short-term productivity demotivates them and comprises sincere loyalty to and enthusiasm for corporations.

Limitations and Future Directions

This empirical study has the following limitations. First, the focus is on female employees; thus, we could not discuss the effects of submissive loyalty on male employees because the data we used was secondary. Additional data will enable a comparison between male and female perceptions. In general, the work-family conflict experienced by female employees is considered to be more serious than that experienced by males. However, submissive loyalty may negatively influence the work-life balance and job and life satisfaction of male employees. The male-female comparison would further legitimize supporting family-friendly policies aimed at promoting work-life balance and corporate programs for sustainable career development.

Further research should examine the generalizability of submissive loyalty. If this culture is unique to Korea, the findings cannot be extended to studies of other countries. Follow-up studies could refine the measures capturing the characteristics of collectivism, hierarchy, patriarchy, and masculine cultures. A cross-national study could focus on culturally similar but different countries such as Japan, China, and Singapore.

CONCLUSION

This study conceptualizes submissive loyalty in the context of Korean corporations and empirically proves the effects of submissive loyalty on work-family conflict and job and -life satisfaction. The study may provide a foundation to support economic-social participation and the realization of gender equality. Organizational cultures cannot be changed rapidly or easily; however, the government's efforts to achieve and academically rigorous examination of work-life balance can build family-friendly climates in productivity-oriented corporates. For all employees, especially women, submissive loyalty is a formidable obstacle to work-life balance in a society where traditional values and stereotypical roles are at odds with modernization. Future studies should more practically untangle the causal paths found in this analysis and make recommendations to ameliorate a negative corporate climate and submissive loyalty, which decrease work-life balance and job and life satisfaction.

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