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The logo for the International Institute of Social Studies, featuring the word "Erasmus" in a stylized, cursive script.

**Juggling it all:
A discourse analysis of the Korean work-life balance policy
through gender lens**

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List of Acronyms

CDA	Critical discourse analysis
GDP	Gross domestic product
KRW	Korean Won (currency of South Korea)
MOEL	Ministry of Employment and Labour
MOGEF	Ministry of Gender Equality and Family
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
Wo-La-Bael	Work life balance
WPR	What's the problem represented to be?

Abstract

This research seeks to examine work life balance policy of the Moon Jae-in administration of Korea (2017 May to 2022 May) through gender perspective. Guided by women's empowerment approach, this study applies critical discourse analysis to public speeches and statements made by high-ranking decision makers. By conducting a critical discourse analysis, specifically WPR approach (What is the problem represented to be?) developed by Carol Bacchi, I explore the way the government views, problematizes and silences gender inequality through dominant representations of the work life balance policy. The analysis shows certain gender awareness of the Moon administration, specifically with policy efforts to address care crisis trying to encourage men to participate in childcare. However, there exists a commonality with previous administrations in the way that the policy takes an instrumental approach towards women as it aims to maximize women's workforce for macroeconomic growth and development. Therefore, the policy deeply rooted in developmentalism hinders the work life balance policy from being a transformative avenue to intrinsically empower women and consequently to dismantle gender inequality in all realms of life.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research contributes to development studies that focus on women and gender. Gender justice, as part of a broader concern for social justice, is part and parcel of a rights-based approach to development as it was globally recognized at the International Conference on Population and Development held in 1994 placing individual dignity and human rights at the very heart of development. Acknowledging the power of language in policies, this study shows how the discourse of the work life balance policy affects gender relations. By applying a discursive policy framing analysis based on constructionist approach, it adds to the limited critical literature of feminism, specifically on gendered characteristics of policies.

Keywords

Gender equality, policy framing, discursive policy analysis, work-life/family balance policy, women's empowerment, WPR approach

1 Introduction

“L'égalité absolue entre l'homme et la femme est la condition nécessaire pour constituer l'unité humaine.”
[The absolute equality between men and women is a necessary condition to attain human unity.]
Flora Tristan, as cited in Hélène Périvier 2020, p.70

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Emergence of 'Wo-La-Bael'

Work-life balance is a new buzzword in Korea. Young generations call it 'Wo-La-Bael' to make it easy to say. A recent survey of job seekers, when asked which factor is more important between salary and work-life balance, 71.8% of respondents chose work-life balance over remuneration (Kim, 2021). Another survey of employees in their 20s, 30s revealed that 26.6% of respondents felt urge to quit their job due to poor work-life balance (Choi, 2021). In a country where hard work and long working hours have been traditionally valued, it is a clear sign that there is a shift in social norms as paid work becomes less important.

According to OECD's "Better Life Index" published in 2020 based on data of 37 OECD countries and 4 partner countries, Korea's life satisfaction index was ranked lower than OECD average of 6.5 with only 5.9 on a scale from 0 to 10. The report also shows that the Korea's performance on work-life balance was ranked at the third lowest among 41 countries with 4.1 out of 10 (OECD, 2020). Indeed, Koreans work long hours. According to another OECD data, South Korea has the third-longest average work hours per person (1,967 hours) after Mexico (2,137 hours) and Costa Rica (2,060 hours) among OECD countries in 2019 (OECD, 2021). The data demonstrates that Koreans work 241 hours more per year than employees in OECD countries on average (1,726 hours).

As the country's rapid industrialization and economic growth brought about women's increasing labour participation and expansion of dual-income families, a series of social issues such as low fertility, ageing society and care crisis emerged. For a long time, the family took the burden of care due to the lack of both public and economically accessible private care provision until the early 2000s (Ochiai 2009; Peng 2010; Baek, Sung, and Lee 2011; Kim, 2018). Kim (2018) explains that the care crisis originates from increasing care deficit influenced by multiple factors: the demographic change due to decreasing fertility rate, transformation of family composition, women's growing labour participation, changing norms related with marriage, family, and care responsibility.

In 2017, a socially progressive president, Moon Jae-in, was elected with the political slogan of "People come first". President Moon pledged to be a 'feminist president' (Park, 2017) and advocated for 'life where people can enjoy evenings'. The Moon administration (2017 May – 2022 May) implemented a series of work-life balance policy : 1) the 52-hour work hour program setting the limit of maximum working hours and expansion of flexible work arrangements in both public and private sector 2) increase in paternal birth leave from 3 to 10 days along with expansion of public childcare aid allowing parents to reduce working hours for childcare while raising maximum care allowance for paternal care leave to 2.5 million KRW, set at 1.5 million KRW since 2014. According to the ministry of employment and labour, the yearly uptake of paternal care leave increased from 12,043(13.4% out of the total uptake) in 2017 to 27,423(24.5% out of the total uptake) in 2020 (MOEL, 2021).

1.1.2 Victims of a patriarchal society

Despite rapid modernization and economic growth in the second half of the 20th century, South Korea's gender inequality is shown to be persistently high. Systematic discrimination towards women played a role of "catalyst" (Park, 1993, p. 134) for rapid industrialization and economic growth as women provided low-paid labour enabling Korea's high competitiveness in the international trade market and consequently, this discrimination was further reinforced by the economic growth. Over the course of growth, cheapened labour of Korean women was massively deployed in "female manufacturing industries" (Park, 1993, p. 132) such as textile and clothing, shoes manufacturing. By conducting a comparative empirical study on gender wage differentials in Korea and Taiwan, Seguino (2000) reveals that certain gaps still exist in access and control over material resources by gender. Although women's participation in labour and access to education has expanded, Korea ranks well below global average on the gender equality indices. The 2020 Global gender gap report places Korea 108 out of 153 countries indicating women's low economic participation, opportunity and political empowerment (Weforum, 2020). According to the 2019 glass ceiling index, which measures where women have the best chance of equal treatment at work, Korea scores the lowest among 29 OECD countries (The economist, 2020). Gender pay gap is the highest among OECD countries with 31.5% as of 2020 (OECD, 2021). Clearly, there is an undeniable discrepancy between the country's progress in economic growth and the one in gender equality. Stating that many regulations have maintained male-oriented and discriminatory characteristics even though the 1948 constitution guaranteed gender equality and women's suffrage, Nam (2010) points out that the fact that it took 50 years of struggle to abolish the male-headed family system in the family law demonstrates how deeply rooted and prevalent the "patri-lineal familial hierarchy" is in Korea (p.67).

The Korean labour market shows persistent job segregation between men and women. Despite women's high labor participation, more than 40% of female workers are employed in irregular employment and most of them are not unionized while the number of male workers engaged in irregular employment has been gradually decreasing with 26.5% as of 2018 (Statistics Korea, 2018). According to the ministry of gender equality and family, part-time women's employment rate among total women's employment is 55% as of August 2020 while rate of high-ranking female officers is 7.6% as of June 2020 (MOGEF). A survey conducted towards workers by Korean Women's Development Institute in 2018 shows that 41.1% of workers experienced sexual discrimination at work in relation to reward and pay (Hankookilbo, 2018).

At the same time, increasing labour participation of women brought about a phenomenon of 'care crisis' as women shoulder double, triple burden of paid work, unpaid care work and community work, due to existing gender roles. According to an analysis on Korean women's work family balance index, Korean women show lowest fertility rate and highest rate of career interruption among OECD countries (Choi and Yang, 2014). Also, a time use survey reported by Statistics Korea in 2020 (Statistics Korea, 2020) reveals that there exists an obvious gender gap of household work time: there is a time difference of 2 hours and 17 minutes dedicated to household chores and care work between couples in 2019, decreasing by 22 minutes from 2014. Patriarchal gender ideology does not only apply to families. Care work is considered as women's job even outside families. In a study examining the current status of the care industry of Korea conducted by Hong and Kim (2014), it is clearly shown that women are the major workforce taking 92.7% of the entire care work and that there exists wage penalty towards care workers with pays 9.2% lower on average than other industries despite increasing importance and expansion of the sector. In her seminal book 'Caring democracy', Tronto (2013) states that, in contemporary societies, childcare is extremely

feminized, and the existing political economic conditions create a vicious circle of unfair care for caretakers by highly rewarding ‘winner-take-all’ victors (p. 96).

Sexual violence is also prevalent in daily lives. A survey conducted by the ministry of gender equality and family in 2018 reveals that, among workers in all public and private companies with more than 50 employees, 8.1 % of workers experienced sexual harassment where women were more likely to be the victims with young women in service industry working as irregular employee facing more sexual abuse (MOGEF 2019). Through a study on an online feminist movement against sexual violence started in October 2016 revealing victims’ accusations and testimonies, Kim (2018) emphasizes that this phenomenon, which started a year before the #metoo movement, shows “misogynistic rape culture is endemic throughout Korean society” (p.505). Yet, there are constant challenges and efforts to change the culture of male dominance. A comparative study of Korea and Japan on the impact of the #MeToo movement (Hasunuma and Shin, 2019) demonstrates that the #MeToo movement inspired many women to publicly accuse their perpetrators and their accusations led to mobilizing a series of demonstrations and demands for government interventions on gender-based violence. The authors further explain that Korean women’s recent activism against femicide and hidden camera abuse also motivated them to participate in the movement and this resulted in affecting “virtually all fields, including laws, politics, academia, entertainment, and the arts” (p.107). Despite backlash against feminist movements and increasing anti-feminism, gender issues are attracting more social attention in Korea, which impacts the government’s policy direction.

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Work life balance discourse

For those taking interest in working life quality and its relation to other areas of life, work-life/family balance has long been a matter of concern (Guest, 2002). Guest explains that the work-life balance has come up as an issue in contemporary policy debates because the pressure and intensity of work increased in recent years due to factors such as information technology development and accordingly increasing data to process, demand for quality customer service and prompt communication. He further elaborates that increase in one-parent families, privatized family life due to the rise of individualization and lack of local resources as well as changing values of work contributed to the rising interest in degrading quality of family and community life. Although traditional perspective on the relationship between work and life varies, such as segmentation model assuming no influence between work and non-work and conflict model based on the existence of high demands in all spheres of life and resulting conflicts and unavoidable prioritization, Guest argues that these models do not give an answer to what is the status of the balance between work and life (ibid.). For Guest, the balance can be interpreted differently depending on individuals and circumstances due to its subjectivity, objectivity as well as physical, psychological meaning. At the same time, the concept of work and life is problematic. While the concept of work is contentious, there is no distinct boundary between work and life. Guest (2002) claims that “the term work-life balance is in itself a misnomer and serves simply as a convenient shorthand for work and the rest of life” (p.262). Weeks (2011) raises a question on the way life is placed in opposition to work. After all, “life is part of work, and work is part of life” (p. 232). Yet, there exist continuous scholarly, public interest and policy interventions for better work life balance.

A strand of literature in human resources management discusses the effects of work-life balance on workers’ well-being and work performance (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Lockwood, 2004; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007; McCarthy et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2013; Kim, 2014). Kim

(2014) explains that company initiatives for workers' work-life balance are becoming more and more important due to changes of environment and value. A study done in Korean business context also reveals a positive relationship between the work-family balance experiences and employees' life satisfaction, job satisfaction (Ryu, 2012, as cited in Kim, 2014). Through an empirical study conducted on employees working in SMEs, Kim emphasizes the importance of managerial effort to ameliorate work-life balance to secure employees' affective commitment which leads to better work performance. However, the efforts made in organizations are criticized by many owing to the fact that the interest lies in profit maximization. Critiquing the work-life balance policy promoted by companies, Collins (2007) claims that the priority of companies is to maximize employee' performance by rendering them burden-free from the world outside companies and it is only applicable to a small group of employees in formal sector. Therefore, the purpose of enhancing employees' work-life balance is to increase workers' dedication to work and to maximize company profit.

A great number of studies investigated policy aspect of work life balance (Crompton and Lyonette, 2006; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Gregory and Milner, 2011; Haas and Rostgaard, 2011; Biofield and Franzoni, 2015; Park, 2019). The policy was first adopted by leading industrialized countries facing demographic change characterized by low fertility rate and ageing population in order to enable citizens to reconcile work and family and the policy generally includes leave programs, flexible working hours, entitlement programs and childcare services (Park, 2019). Attributing increasing attention to work-life balance to rising levels of employment among women, Crompton and Lyonette (2006) state that, while some Nordic countries have more positive results of policy intervention based on less traditional social gender norm on domestic division of labour, European governments are pursuing women's labour market participation for economic stability and poverty reduction. However, comparative research of Nordic countries conducted by Haas and Rostgaard (2011) show positive effects of state initiative of paternal leave quota on work-family reconciliation and gender equality.

Nevertheless, a strand of literature points to the gendered state and market as a fundamental cause of poor work-life balance (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005; Lewis and Campbell, 2008; Shin, 2009; Park, 2019). Problematizing gender-neutral policy approach of UK government, Lewis and Campbell (2008) contend that due to gendered norms, work life/family balance policies can have different consequences for male and females and implementation of the policy does not necessarily encourage men to do care work. Also, a study conducted by Smithson and Stokoe (2005), contrasting policymakers' and organizational discourse on flexible working hours and work-life balance, demonstrates that gender-neutral official discourse can lead to reinforcing gendered practices in organizations. Lewis claims that women were instrumentalized because work-family policy in Europe was implemented with an intention to facilitate women's labour participation (Lewis, 2009, as cited in Cody-Rydzewski, 2011). In line with Lewis, Mazur argues that work-family reconciliation policy does not always benefit women and the policy itself is not positive in feminist perspectives (Mazur, 2002, p.102, as cited in Shin, 2009).

Lewis et al. (2007) contribute to the understanding of the discourse stating that the work life balance metaphor is a socially constructed notion located within a particular period of time, influenced by social, economic and workplace developments and concerns and, at the same time, questions the lacking effects and consequences on the systemic issues that the work life balance discourse engenders. Critiquing work-life balance discourses incorporating individual choice dimension, Lewis et al. (2007) point out the problem of ignored structural, cultural, and relational constraints as the discourse often leads to "quick fix solutions" without addressing fundamental issues of work life balance (Gambles et al., 2006; Smithson and Stokoe, 2005, as cited in Lewis et al., p.362). Calling for an alternative approach, Lewis et al.

claim that a social constructionist approach can shed light on our understanding of work life balance since it allows us to interrogate “who gains, who is damaged, who is silenced, what traditions are sustained and which are undermined and what futures created” (Gergen, 1999, as cited in Lewis et al, 2007, p.362). Through the approach, the underlying presupposition of the discourse and its implications, alternatives are explored (ibid.).

Besides, it should be acknowledged that individual choices are “socially embedded” (Lewis and Giullari, 2005, as cited in Lewis et al. 2007, p. 366) because the choices are made in gendered contexts surrounding individuals. Thus, it is crucial to question underpinning assumptions of work practices even in flexible and supportive workplace for the reason that there is a gap between discourse and reality of structural and cultural constraints influenced by gendered ideologies and notions (Lewis and Humbert, 2010).

In Korea, work-life/family reconciliation was considered as women’s issue for a long time as women take double burden of productive and reproductive work (Shin, 2009). Due to the recent phenomenon of significantly low fertility of Korea, researchers have been increasingly interested in identifying causes of low fertility trend and economic, social conditions engendering the demographic crisis (Preut, 2016; Kim, 2018; Park et al, 2020). Kim (2018) claims that phenomenon of low fertility is closely related with gender inequity of Korea and thus, public support for reproductive work and better work-life balance is needed. Shin (2009) contends that social ideology normalizing long working hours hindered time use for family and individual outside work and consequently, failed in securing better work-life balance. Citing Korean labour culture as one of the fundamental causes of low fertility, where long working hours is considered ordinary with strong hierarchy and work is prioritized over family life (Chin et al, 2015 as cited in Preut, 2016), Preut emphasizes the need to have family-friendly corporate culture and men’s participation in care work explaining that “South Korea’s gendered society has been an obstacle in producing effective policies for fertility increase” (ibid. p.25).

Numerous studies investigated policy interventions on work and life/family reconciliation and its social effects in Korea (Kim, 2012; Kang, 2017; Song, 2018; Lee and Son, 2020). These studies examine work-life/family policy in terms of following three foci; economic perspective centred on women’s labour participation and productivity, gender justice perspective and family policy perspective focusing on fertility increase/family life quality. Song’s study (2018) shows that governmental work family reconciliation programs have significant influence on child value and childbirth decisions. However, according to Kim (2012), although many of the work family/life policy explicitly aim at increasing fertility rate, there is discrepancy in the way policies are designed among care policies. Kim further states that, although most of the leave scheme and flexible working hour programs take into consideration women’s labour participation, public care service is lacking in the sense that it does not reflect women’s employment and more seriously, irregular workers do not benefit from the program. Examining the policy in gender perspective, Kim (2012) claims that “gender-blinded policy design” (p. 148) results in sustaining or reinforcing existing gender norms of labour. Analysing housework conceptualization in Korea, Koo (2018) explains the transition from women-friendly policy to work-family balance, to work-life balance and indicates that, in general, women are still presumed to take the responsibility of care work. Even though the term of work-life balance does not specify women’s role as the primary care givers, paid work is prioritized over unpaid work, and housework becomes peripheral over other activities of leisure(ibid.).

In sum, the concept of work life balance is controversial, and its effects and meaningfulness questioned by many. However, it is necessary to examine gender relations embedded in the policy discourse since it is closely associated with how we share daily activities including unpaid reproductive work and spend time, energy. To date, a number of studies have

investigated policy designs and influence of work family/life balance programs. However, little research has been conducted on the Moon Jae-in government's policy frame of work-life balance policy and potential gender implications. Even though policies are often expressed as gender-neutral, "all policies are gendered" (Mcphail, 2003, p.44). After all, major norms and values favored by the state function as a crucial factor for gender equity. In that sense, this study will fill the gap of absence of literatures on the work-life balance policy by examining the policy and its gendered assumptions of the most recent Korean government led by an avowed feminist friendly president, shedding light on the understanding of the progress and limitations of state intervention in terms of gender equality.

1.3 Research questions and strategy

Work-life balance is closely related with gender equality because it affects gender relations in family and labour market. Work-family/life balance policy in Korea, evolved from support program for working women to public care expansion and decrease in worktime, could be a meaningful strategy for realizing gender equity since it has contributed to recognition of personal/family life in a work-oriented society and to improvement in gender division of labour (Kim et al., 2016). As this research seeks to explore how gender elements position in work-life balance policy frame in the Korean society and to identify potential implications of government intervention in relation to gender relations, it is important to examine the way the policy is formulated to find out deeply embedded perceptions and norms. For that, discourse analysis was considered as a pertinent approach, because by viewing policies as discourse, "it captures the ways in which policy shapes the world, how these are framed as societal problems with proposed government solutions" (Goodwin, 2011, p.168). Discursive approach also allows us to ponder upon silenced problems and alternative policy directions(ibid.). In that sense, a discourse policy analysis helped me to answer the main research question, 'How does work-life balance policy of the Moon Jae-in administration address gender relations at work and to what extent is it in line with the previous governments?' as it is based on social constructionist ideas that policy is not a response to existing problems, rather constructing problems based on shared assumptions of the community(ibid.).

To answer the main research question 'How does work-life balance policy of the Moon Jae-in administration address gender relations at work and to what extent is it in line with the previous governments?', the paper asks following sub questions guided by "what is the problem represented to be" (WPR) approach developed by Bacchi: 1) What is problematized through work-life balance policy in terms of gender? 2) What assumptions related to gender relations and labour conditions are embedded in the policy? 3) What are potential implications on gender relations at work engendered by this representation of the problem?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next chapter overviews conceptual frameworks of women's empowerment for the following section. The third outlines methodology and research data, before the fourth chapter describes the results of the analysis on the work life balance policy through gender perspective. The concluding section summarizes the findings and discusses a way forward with recommendations for further policy and practice.

2 Conceptualizing women's empowerment

Gender has been long misunderstood as a notion describing women or a concept associated with women related studies (Scott, 1986). Scott elucidates the concept of gender stating gender should be understood as “an analytic category”, “a way of talking about systems of social or sexual relations” (1986, p.1066). She further explains that gender is a component of social relationships which can differ depending on how people recognize sexual differences and a fundamental way of showing power relations among people. Illustrating gender stratification, Collins et al. (1993) provide a framework including 3 main sets of structure; gender organization of production and the one of reproduction, and sexual politics, all of which affect gender resource mobilization and consequently, gender conflicts. As the context of power relations in identities is essential aspect of gender, the intersectionality, which is interaction among different types of identities constituting human lives and power distribution resulting from interactions, could create oppression and opportunity (Davis, 2008). Therefore, age, ethnicity, gender, or religion can situate people differently over the course of interactions with other social actors. Labour market, treated to be gender-neutral by economists for a long time, is where production and reproduction intersect since it is shaped by “bearers of gender” such as practices, perceptions, and norms. (Elson, 1999, p.611). According to Elson, unlike many mainstream economists claim, the discrimination against women in the labour market would continue even if it means lowering profits and output, because the discrimination against women strengthens men's social and political power. Emphasizing the role of government in changing social perceptions and setting standards, Elson points out that excluding informal sector in the policy implementation based on public/private dichotomy could undermine the policy effects(ibid.).

2.1 Instrumental vs Intrinsic empowerment

The concept of women's empowerment is one of the most contested one as it is a principle which has been upheld by various entities including scholars and development agencies with different interests (Cornwall, 2016).

In Korea, many scholars have raised questions on policy approaches regarding its implications on gender equality. Indicators reveal that the progress on gender equality seems to be slow despite all the institutional initiatives developed by the Korean government to combat gender discrimination (see Cho, Cho and Song, 2010). In fact, feminist scholars (Moser, 1989; Jackson, 1996; Zuckerman, 2007; Arend, 2010; Calkin, 2014; Chant and Sweetman, 2012; Wilson, 2015; Byatt, 2018) have criticized increasing labour participation of women and investment in women as “smart economics” (Chant and Sweetman, 2012, p.517) because women are often instrumentalized in growth oriented developmentalism. By applying critical discourse analysis, Calkin (2014) reveals that empowerment narrative originating from ‘Smart economics’ creates a development discourse and gender equality is narrowly understood as women's broader economic participation. Problematizing instrumental approach as efficiency approach assuming women's economic participation enhances women's status and gender equity, Moser (1989) points out limitation of instrumental approach stating that the approach meets only practical gender needs at the cost of women's long labour and unpaid work.

Besides, empowerment approach taken by development agencies often target individual women assuming empowered individuals can transform their surroundings and communities eventually leading to structural change. (Cornwall and Edwards, 2010). This idea is based on the presumption that women with opportunities, regardless of the social, cultural norms and institutions, can create and change their world. This assumption overlooks contextualization of our realities. Another major criticism on the instrumental view on empowerment of many

development agencies is ignorance of transformative nature of women's empowerment (Cornwall, 2016). Cornwall and Edwards problematize the way that empowerment is treated as a quick and easy solution by development agencies rather than as a process (Cornwall and Edwards, 2010). That way, empowerment is perceived as a quick-fix with one-stop intervention such as better access to credit or health service and, as a consequence, power to bring about changes belongs to outside world. Viewing empowerment as a quick-fix renders measurement feasible and often this measurement is simply regarded as outcomes and achievements of the intervention.

Numerous feminist scholars criticized the way the concept of empowerment has been co-opted by development agencies and governments. Batliwala (2007) emphasizes that the empowerment is "socio-political process" (p.559), and that power is critical as operating concept within empowerment, therefore, grassroot participation is important to mobilize large-scale transformative political action. Like Batliwala, Rowlands (1995) views power as foundational concept of empowerment and identifies disputed concept of power as the reason for uncritical use of empowerment approach. She points out that power within empowerment goes beyond 'power over', which signifies domination over others, and that increase in power does not necessarily diminish that of another. According to Rowlands, empowerment is not only about decision-making but also a process that leads people to realize their entitlement to decision making as it builds both power within and power with. Moreover, as human abilities and potentials are socially constructed, empowerment process should include personal, relational and collective level (ibid.).

Also paying attention to relational nature of empowerment, Kabeer (2005) elucidates empowerment with three dimensions of agency, resource, and achievement: Agency is exercised through resources such as education and employment as medium and achievements are the outcomes of agency. As choices are constrained by social norms and institutional bias and resources are distributed through institutions and social relations, agency includes transformative forms challenging existing power relations. Here, resources are not limited to materials in conventional economic perspective but can be human, social and institutional, which serve to augment decision-making capacity and exercise agency. Valuing collective action in empowerment, Kabeer claims that movements encompassing different identities is required for change of gender relations and institutional transformation. Cornwall (2016) agrees on Kabeer's idea recognizing the importance of resources and collective action, claiming that the process of empowerment would be severely lacking if the initiatives focus only on women's assets and resources.

For more gender aware policy intervention, Moser (1989) underscores the significance of integrative cross-sectoral planning strategies in terms of policy intervention, recognizing potential negative effects of single-sectoral policy approaches on different aspects of life. Diagnosing Korean women's subordination as a result of subordination to tradition/patriarchy and unprepared exposure to individualistic, capitalist economic system, Lee (2020) contends that empowerment approach can be a useful tool for transformative change of gender relations in Korea. Although women have gained more opportunities of education and obtained legally equal positions with men over the process of industrialization and modernization, paradoxically, burden of care and sacrifice is persistently imposed on women. Lee shares the idea of scholars above mentioned that resources are essential to exercise agency and to foster social solidarity and that collective action and movements are important for better access to information, culture and education. At the same time, Lee underlines that the socially marginalized should be included in the process of empowerment.

In sum, there exists a significant commonality in the understanding among feminist scholars that women's empowerment is a process including some degree of personal development but goes beyond it to involve shifts in power relations. Cornwall (2016) encapsulates feminist

writings on empowerment from the 90s as follows: 1) empowerment is fundamentally about changing power relations and the process entails development of critical consciousness on equality and justice. 2) empowerment is relational, and sociality is a root concept of empowerment as it includes the personal and political. 3) empowerment is a process which does not have a fixed final point and its outcome is not easily assessable. Drawing on gender at work framework developed by Rao and Kelleher (p.346), Cornwall (2016) emphasizes that what we aim to change through empowerment occurs in individual and institutional/systematic level in both formal and informal rules/norms.

The two distinct perspectives of empowerment elaborated above provides important points for analysis of the data in terms of women’s empowerment. In this paper, I use terms ‘instrumental empowerment’ and ‘intrinsic empowerment’ to differentiate them. The main points of two perspectives can be summarized as follows: ‘instrumental empowerment’ focusing on individuals and material resources with quick-fix intervention assuming power coming from outside and ‘intrinsic empowerment’ based on collective and relational characteristics of empowerment as a transformative process accompanied by consciousness raising using socio/institutional resources for power within.

Table 1. Women’s empowerment: Instrumental vs Intrinsic

Instrumental Empowerment	Intrinsic Empowerment
<p>women as the means to achieve effective development objectives such as economic growth, poverty reduction as investment in women and including them in market can be a cost-effective route to development as well as alleviation of gender inequality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one time intervention - focuses on material resources - individual - measurement possible (e.g. school enrolment rate) - Empowerment from outside 	<p>empowerment is about changing gendered power relations/structures, making a real change to oppressive structures, and the process entails development of critical consciousness on equality and justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a process - includes socio/institutional resources - personal, relational, and social - no fixed final point, therefore, instead of measurement, direction and meaning of change is needed. - empowerment from within, thus integrative cross-sectional approach is required

(Source: Author, based on Moser, 1989; Kabeer 1999; Jackson, 1996; Kabeer, 2005; Cornwall and Edwards, 2010; Chant, 2012; Cornwall, 2016)

Chapter 3 Methodology and data collection

3.1 Critical discourse analysis and the WPR approach

This study's methodology is based on discursive policy frame analysis acknowledging the limits of the dominant schools' rational choice approach as the rational approach based on positivism does not take into consideration different ways through which policy makers understand situations and problems (Green and Shapiro, 1994 as cited in Shim et al, 2015). It is important to note that policy making process is not where policy makers resolve problems according to rational and technical criteria (Dayton 2000; Schön and Rein 1994, as cited in Shim et al, 2015) as "all knowledge attempts are socially situated" (Harding, 1992, p.222). In policy making, what is considered as a problem and by whom, based on what assumptions in the policy process profoundly affect the policy decisions (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007) and social issues are differently shaped by involved entities in a particular way depending on their views and solutions proposed to address the issues. (Bacchi, 2005, as cited in Roggeband and Verloo, 2002).

Discourse approach is especially pertinent in case of policy analysis because "it captures the ways in which policy shapes the world through the framing of social problems and government solutions and the construction of concepts, categories, distinctions and subject positions" (Goodwin, 2011, p. 170). This approach changes the way policy is viewed from finding/fixing social problems to "making social problems" (Goodwin, 2011, p.170). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is especially helpful to understand what socially conditioned policy proposes and how the policy is framed. Recognizing CDA as more than a method, rather as a critical perspective, position or attitude, Van Dijk (2009) emphasizes socio-political engagement for social equality and justice of CDA academics. Thus, discursive politics approach allows us to view constructed reality perceived by policy makers and how the reality affects the policy process as it is based on the notion that "underlying structures of belief, perception and conceptualization" shape the policy makers' position (Shim et al, 2015, p.56). In case of my research, CDA enables me to identify beliefs, perceptions and conceptualizations on gender equality of policy makers and to understand how they affect the way policy problems of gender and labor are created in the Korean context.

3.1.1 What's the problem represented to be? (WPR Approach)

This study explores "problematization" elaborated by Bacchi (Goodwin, 2011, p. 170) focusing on how problems are produced in Korean work life balance policy of the current administration in terms of gender perspective, applying analytical framework of 'What's the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) approach, which was developed by Bacchi (Bletsas and Beasley, 2012).

Anchored in social constructionism which posits that our understanding of the world is based on social context and shared assumptions, the approach pays attention to discursive construction of policy problems and helps tease out the frames utilized to interpret social problems by examining and analyzing problem representations policy problematizations contain (Bacchi, 2009). And by identifying presuppositions embedded in policies, the approach lets us reflect upon the effects produced by representation of the problem. Moreover, the approach directs attention to what is not problematized as well as what is problematized in discursive policy construction (ibid.). Bacchi proposes six interrelated questions for a WPR approach to policy analysis and they are summarized as follows:

Table 2. What is the problem represented to be? (WPR) approach

<p style="text-align: center;">What's the problem represented to be?: An approach to policy analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What's the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted, and replaced?

Source: Bacchi (2009, p. 2)

Considering my research scope and focus, from Bacchi's approach questions stated above, I take only questions 1, 2, 4 and 5 for the research and analysis as follows:

- 1) What is problematized through the work-life balance policy in relation to gender?
- 2) What assumptions on gender relations and labor are embedded in the policy?
- 3) What aspects of gender relations are silenced in the problem representation of the policy?
- 4) What are potential implications on gender relations engendered by this representation of the problem?

3.2 Texts and Data selection

The work of discourse analysis of policies starts from policy texts in various forms of written, verbal, nonverbal communication. The WPR approach proposes "working backwards" (p. 3) from concrete policies, programs, and policy proposals to reveal what is represented to be the problems and, drawing on Foucault's suggestion, the approach focuses on prescriptive texts or practical texts (Bacchi, 2009). Bacchi states that applying a WPR approach to policy analysis starts by identifying a policy, program or policy proposal and the raw material for the analysis can consist of policy statements, public addresses, parliamentary debates, government reports, pieces of legislation, court decisions and the like (ibid.).

For discourse analysis, this study uses policy addresses, statements, interviews, and contributions to the media of top-level decision-makers such as presidents, prime ministers, and ministers from May 2017 to December 2020 considering the presidential term of the administration. The speeches related with work-life balance were collected from the official government websites using keywords: the website of presidential office, the website of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Gender equality and family, the ministry of employment and labor. Texts were collected in each website by using key words such as 'work-life balance', 'work-family reconciliation', 'family-friendly', '52-hour workweek', 'flexible working hours', 'care leave/crisis/work', 'women'. Among selected texts, after repeated reading, the ones including texts closely related with the policy were reselected, which includes programs of work life balance (52-hour work week, flexible working arrangements, care support) or related arguments on labor. Finally, 15 texts were chosen for data analysis as the table below.

Table 3. Selected Text

Speaker	Date	Contents
President	2017 June	Administrative speech of the president at the Parliament
	2017 July	Remarks at G20 summit 2017
	2017 October	Speech at a Presidential employment committee meeting
	2017 November	Administrative speech at the Parliament
	2018 January	2018 New year's address
	2019 May	Labour day speech
Deputy prime minister	2017 September	Remarks during a meeting held on a visit to a childcare centre
Minister of gender equality and family	2017 November	Congratulatory remarks at policy forum on work life balance at the parliament
	2017 November	Congratulatory remarks at the general assembly of Korean association of female public tax accountants
	2019 July	Welcome speech at launching ceremony of women mentoring
	2019 September	Inaugural speech of the minister
	2020 January	Minister's new year message 2020
	2020 December	Inaugural speech of the minister
Minister of employment and labour	2019 July	Newspaper contribution published at <i>Money today</i> "the 52-hour work week policy is investment for tomorrow"
	2019 December	Newspaper contribution published at <i>Seoul news</i> "What we need right now is a bicycle equipped with <i>wo-la bael</i> "

In addition, to complement chosen text data and to better understand what aspects of the policy are regarded more important in the actual policy implementation, governmental campaign website on work life balance policy was also examined. While the website introduces different policies implemented for work life balance, it presents public advertisements, concrete ways to change work culture and good practice companies of work life balance as well as benefits expected from the policy. As all the data collected for the research was written in Korean language, the research was conducted in Korean, and data presented in the paper was translated into English by the author. The series of work-life balance policy introduced in the government campaign websites are as follows.

Table 4. Work life balance policy

Policy	Content
The 52-hour work week policy	Reducing the maximum working hours per week to 52 hours
Flexible working hour program	flexible working arrangements allowing employees to adjust their working hours to personal needs(e.g. staggered hours)
childcare leave scheme/support program	Working mothers' birth leave(90days), working fathers' birth leave(10 days), working parents' childcare leave(up to 1 year), incentive for paternal care leave users, family care leave(no pay)

(Source: government's work life balance campaign website <http://www.worklife.kr/website/index/index.asp>)

Chapter 4 Analysis and findings

4.1 Problem representation of the work life balance policy

4.1.1 What is problematized through the policy in terms of gender?

While the discourse and campaign website problematize the current working condition regarding long working hours and lack of care support, the main problem is neither fatigue nor lack of personal time outside work.

The fundamental reason why people suffer is the employment issue. As everyone knows, the current employment status of our society is serious. The unemployment rate and the number of the unemployed are the highest since the year 2000. The unemployment of young people is more serious to the extent that it is described as an employment cliff. Even if we spend a big amount of budget to resolve demographic issue of low fertility and ageing society, as we have experienced so far, the program cannot be effective under the current circumstances. We must stop the growth without employment. The economic paradigm should change to the way that increased employment will bring about growth. (Administrative speech of the president at the Parliament, June 2017)

Reduction of working hours should be realized for people to have decent human life. It is also needed to share more jobs and to increase employment rate of the society. I will first implement the 52-hour work week program. (Speech of president at a presidential employment committee meeting, October 2017)

One of the most recurring themes mentioned by the president is hard life of people due to overwork and the importance of human centeredness. The president laments death and struggle of people due to fatigue and criticizes long working hours. In line with that, he calls for “human-centred” economy and “growth with employment” while pointing out employment issue as the fundamental reason of people’s hardship. The rationale is as follows: if work life balance is achieved through reduced or flexible work hours and better care support, there are employment opportunities for more people and that will also lead to happier lives. Therefore, work-life balance contributes to increase in employment. The president underscores the importance of the employment stating it is one of the most important policy agenda of the government. Here, “human-centeredness” can be interpreted as a status where all people have jobs with decent working conditions. In this perspective, jobs becomes a necessary condition for happiness.

While unemployment issue of young people is considered important, the issue of career disrupted women is viewed as an urgent issue.

Additionally, we need budget to provide more employment opportunities for women and to help them to have happy family lives. The government decided to double maximum childcare allowance for 3 months after childbirth to eliminate financial troubles during childcare leave. It is also problematic if there is no one to take care of the child when the leave ends. Women’s career disruption is a loss for both women and country. We will create 360 new public childcare facilities, by doubling the budget decided originally and reduce parents’ care burden. [...] We also need more budget to help women who desire to work again. start-up consultants and employment consultants will be allocated in employment centres and more vocational training will be provided. (Administrative speech of the president at the Parliament, June 2017)

The government will also shoulder care burden. [...] With the increase of governmental financial support of 9.6 %, the quality of care service will be enhanced. [...] We will lesson worries of working moms. We will make a society where women can keep their lives and values while getting married, giving birth, and raising children. (Presidential new year’s address, January 2018)

One of the priorities is to establish 'wo-la-bael culture'. This is the reason why we are trying to change working culture reducing long working hours and implementing flexible work arrangement program. The objective is not only to increase women's employment but also to make people happy by enhancing the quality of life. According to a Goldman Sachs report published in April 2019, if Korean women's labour participation rate increases to the rate of men, it is expected that the GDP will get 14.4% higher. Therefore, women's labour participation is essential element for inclusive and sustainable growth. (Newspaper contribution of the minister of employment and labour published at Seoul news "What we need right now is a bicycle equipped with wo-la-bael", December 2019)

The issue of “career interrupted women” often appears in the texts; “work-life balance, providing condition where mothers can both work and raise children”, “establishing work life balance and a society where men and women can work and take care of children together in order to raise fertility rate and to provide more work opportunities for women”, “Women’s career disruption is a loss for both women and country”. So, the government problematizes lack of women’s labour participation, and providing environment where more women with children can work through care support, vocational training and less/flexible work hours is assumed to be a solution. This reflects socioeconomic change of Korea over the past 30 years: 1) the Korean industrial structure transformed with the economic development over the past 30 years along with relocation of manufacturing industry abroad, which used to absorb a tremendous part of female labour force in the 70s,80s, and women’s average education level has risen to the level on par with the one of men. 2) The working age population has been decreasing since the mid-2010s due to the low fertility rate and ageing population.

While women’s care burden and the reality where these women cannot use their ability in the society are problematized, career interrupted women are viewed as a group of women who need help from the government to enable them to reach their potential. President calls for “budget to provide work opportunities for women and to help them to have happy family lives” while the minister of gender equality and family declares “career disruption is a loss for the nation. I will try to help them to fulfil themselves to the full”. In this sense, the idea that gender equality can be realized through women’s labour participation is shared among policy actors.

The need for more female labour participation is justified through the discourse of “contributing to the nation”. Competitiveness and growth are another recurring theme. The public campaign advertisement presented in the first page of the campaign website promotes work life balance policy with phrases such as “getting closer to our precious daily lives through wo-la-bael”, “Wo-la-bael for both myself and workplace”, “competitiveness for all”. Examples in the text data can be found as follows: “To enhance the potential growth rate of our economy, expansion of women’s labor participation is the key point.”, “In order to overcome the crisis of low fertility and low growth that Korea experience today and to increase national competitiveness, women’s empowerment and expansion of women’s social participation are crucial.” Thus, workers’ lack of personal time outside work has negative effect on both employees and employer by lowering their productivity and competitiveness. The minister of employment and labour clearly states the objective of work life balance policy as “to increase women’s employment and to make people happy by enhancing the quality of life” explaining expected positive macro-economic effect in case of women’s labour participation increase. Presupposed that women’s increased labour participation will increase the quality of life and make families happy by increasing their income, which will lead to national economic growth. Therefore, the policy direction is deeply rooted in the developmentalism with efforts to mobilize more workforce for greater good.

Overall, the policy discourse fails to grasp gendered characteristics of labour in market and in family. While care burden of women is somehow recognized in the text data, the 52-hours work policy and flexible work hours indicated in the campaign website are generally gender neutral and lacks the understanding on care work and housework as these policies are promoted with the need of more personal time for self-realization, leisure and family care in order to increase productivity. This leaves questions on how work life balance policy can result in happiness of all.

4.1.2 What assumptions on gender relations and labor are embedded in the policy?

First, the data recognizes that work-life balance realized through reduced and flexible work arrangements and expanded childcare support will lead to increase in employment opportunities for women, which will contribute to macroeconomic growth. It is assumed that gender equality can be realized by providing women with income. The discourse of career disruption of women is in line with this. As many women are not participating in the labour market due to care burden, inducing them to formal employment is a strategy to increase gross domestic product and national competitiveness. And by inducing more women into the labour market and providing them with more financial resources, not only individual, family and the country benefit. Here, resources of women's empowerment are both financial and institutional as the government tries to deal with the care crisis with both vocational opportunities and care support.

Yet, while there is consensus for the need of more women's economic activity with the idea that "career disruption of women is loss to all", there is a certain discrepancy between other high-ranking policy makers and the minister of gender equality and family in relation to gender conceptualization.

To enhance the potential growth rate of our economy, expansion of women's labor participation is the key point. There need to be comprehensive efforts including governmental support, change of system and practice, culture so that outstanding women can become working members of diverse areas of the society and break glass ceilings. And all the ministries will work together to establish work-life balance culture and to make a society where men and women can work and raise children together for higher fertility rate and women's participation in economic activities. (Remarks of a deputy prime minister during a meeting held on a visit to a childcare centre, September 2017)

First of all, I will work on realizing a society of substantive gender equality. I will strengthen collaboration between ministries for more gender sensitive policy decisions and run gender mainstreaming system such as gender impact assessment, gender sensitive budget. By working on discriminatory aspects existing in policy, system and daily lives, people will notice changed effects of policy of gender equality. I will try to break glass ceiling and to promote gender balanced growth in public and private sector. For women's participation in economic activities and prevention of career disruption, I will establish support system for work-life balance. Especially, in response to COVID-19, while assisting women in keeping their jobs, I will strengthen collaboration with other ministries to promote women's re-entry to labor market and to create high quality jobs.

Secondly, I will try to make a safe society, one without violence. I will work on revision of relevant laws and following measures to eradicate violence against women such as cyber sexual crime, online grooming offence. Furthermore, I will make efforts to protect and support victims in their perspectives. Fundamentally, I will change the discriminatory culture and environment through examining organizational culture and consulting services. (Inaugural speech of the minister of gender equality and family, December 2020)

The minister of gender equality and family recognizes other issues regarding gender equality mentioning "sexual violence", "systematic sexual discrimination" as well as "women's career

disruption”, “making workplace gender equal in order for women to fulfill themselves” while other officials’ concern is limited to struggle of many women not being able to work in formal economy and inducing more women to the labor market, stating “career interruption”, “providing condition where women can work with respect”, “need for more women’s labor participation to increase potential growth rate”. While the latter focuses more on competitiveness and growth through maximizing labor force, equating gender equality with increasing women’s labor participation, the minister of gender equality and family recognizes other aspects of gender relations existing inside and outside labor market. The minister of gender equality and family has a broader notion on gender problematizing structural discriminatory factors and culture in labor market and in other organizations including sexual politics. This discrepancy could explain the limited consideration and incorporation of gender perspective in policies. Probably, this minority position of the ministry of gender equality and family in the government reflects mainstream understanding and conceptualization on gender in Korea, and offer explanation for the phenomenon that the ministry often faces public criticism towards its role, existence, and public demands for abolishing the ministry (The Korea Herald, 2021). At the same time, the inconsistency on the conceptualization of gender between high-ranking officials could be interpreted as a positive sign in a sense that this could be the source of a potential change.

While the care crisis and women’s care burden are somewhat recognized with the increase in childcare support and incentive for paternal care use, the policy lacks efforts for changing existing gender norms and patriarchy. Although the campaign website promotes better work life balance, it is focused on promoting how to change work culture as if the less work burden could resolve care crisis and women’s lack of labour participation. It is presumed that if the workers are given more time outside work, they will dedicate time outside paid work to care work regardless of their gender. One important question to raise is if fathers will also share care work if they have more free time at work considering existing gendered division of labour. The gender-neutral characteristics of the policy obscures the issue of double, triple burden that women confront in everyday lives. Furthermore, as shown in the texts such as “we need budget to provide more employment opportunities for women and to help them to have happy family lives.”, “We will make a society where women can keep their lives and values while getting married, giving birth, and raising children.”, women are still considered as primary carers and family is viewed as women’s domain since providing support to women with work life balance policy is as a way to provide favourable conditions for them to continue to work while keeping their roles inside families as a caretaker. Thus, the gender roles embedded in the policy discourse are firmly based on patriarchy associating women’s responsibilities and values primarily with family, private domain. Confined in this public-private dichotomy, female laborers are bound to be secondary earners, or they are asked to work like men once accepted to the labour market because public domain is considered to be male sphere.

Furthermore, the policy discourse is deeply rooted in heteronormative notion of family. The policy effort to increase fathers’ care leave uptake and emphasis on “a society where men and women can work and raise children together” presumes that a family consists of a father, a mother and 1 or 2 children. This assumption on the Korean ‘traditional’ family model of heterosexual nuclear family neglects the diversifying family structure of the society. Besides, even though the value of labor is admitted as crucial for the nation by policy actors, work is narrowly defined as the one in the productive labor market. The need to expand public care support is widely recognized as necessary to induce career interrupted women into the labor market because the reproductive work is not considered to contribute to productivity or national competitiveness. The Korean government developed a household production satellite account in 2018 acting on the recommendation of UN, initiated with the purpose of providing an overview of the productive activities undertaken by households

(Statistics Korea, 2018). Although it is expressed in the statistics as if the housework has some financial value, it is, in reality, not recognized as part of domestic product. Thus, the value of unpaid housework is not fully recognized (Berik, 2018; Dengler & Strunk, 2018; Himmelweit, 1995 as cited in Koo, 2021) and leaves doubt on the use of the statistical account of unpaid housework since concretized value of the housework through the account is neglected in related government interventions such as work life balance policy. This conceptualization of work limited to paid labor market is in tandem with mainstream economics focusing on productivity and efficiency based on monetary output, excluding unpaid work from economic activities, consequently, marginalizing many devoted to the unpaid labor.

4.1.3 What are potential implications on gender relations engendered by the representation of the problem?

As explored above, the ‘problem’ of work life balance is represented to be women’s low labor market participation. To discuss potential implications of the policy, I elaborate on what is left unproblematic in the policy. As mentioned above, focusing on reduction of work hours and flexible working arrangements to promote work-life balance assumes that increased free time as a result of reduced workhours will naturally lead to sharing of care work between couples. While women’s care burden is perceived to be an important issue, the policy does not address the issue of existing unequal care pattern nor the one of how to encourage the public to share care work. It seems that the government is aware of the difficulty of changing informal norms as there exist certain government efforts for consciousness raising among the public about work life balance and importance of changes in the way work is arranged. But the campaign focuses on the area of productive labour market, specifically on work culture, and does not encourage men to change their behaviour regarding reproductive work, neglecting the need to deconstruct gender division of labour.

Yet, the fact that the current government expanded childcare support at a substantial level shows certain gender awareness as the policy was designed with the intention to encourage fathers’ care leave uptake. The effort to induce both parents to take care leave could be interpreted as a progress made by the current administration because the program aims at encouraging more fathers to take the leave by legally giving more birth leave for fathers and by increasing allowances to mitigate financial burdens for couples who take care leaves consecutively. Under the previous administration, the paternal birth leave was only 3 days, and the allowance was far from enough to cover expenses of those who have newborn babies.

Despite some progress on gender awareness, the overall policy discourse lacks its understanding of care crisis, and it leaves doubts for getting expected policy results. Even though care burden is mentioned several times in speeches of the president and minister of gender equality and family, housework burden is silenced in the speech as if it does not exist or is not an issue. This is in line with the gender role hierarchy of public, private dichotomy which prioritize public domain, trivializing private domain which is considered as women’s area. Adding to the gender division of labor, this devaluation of housework could be explained not only with the loss of production value in the market but also with a social phenomenon that people identify themselves with their occupation as a way of self-realization in modern Korea (Koo, 2018). Valorizing public domain focusing on reducing work hours while not changing formal, informal gender norms, demands women to become like men participating in paid employment and still managing the double shift. Yet, the question on where men are placed in care and housework and what roles they play in them is left unaddressed. Thus, there is a possibility that the policy reinforces existing gender norms and injustice as reduced working hours have limited effect on sharing care.

In addition, even though the government seems to be aware of the importance of consciousness raising, it is not directed towards resolving discrimination and violence women

experience in the labor market. Despite the emphasis in employment, gendered labor market and its systemic discrimination are not addressed in the policy. For example, policy makers mention the problem of gender pay gap and promise to expand public childcare. However, the issue of the devalued care work in paid labor market is silenced, which are predominantly feminine. Although social care service expansion could help parents to some extent by diminishing care burden, unless undervalued and underpaid caregivers' work is not properly rewarded, the value of care work and emotional work will be persistently neglected.

Another unproblematized aspect of this policy is intersectionality. As the policy is basically based on the ideal family model of heterosexual nuclear family, the policy can have exclusionary effects or stigmatizing effects on people forming different family structure, excluding families of homosexual couples and single parents, who also constitute the nation as citizens and who often need more public support than stereotypical families. A survey on single parent families conducted by the ministry of gender equality and family in 2018 (MOGEF, 2019) revealed that 80% of the single parent families have financial difficulties due to childcare and education. In 2019 alone, 317 children were adopted into families abroad and 90 % of the total intercountry adoption of 248,341 since 1950 is born out of wedlock because single mothers are publicly shamed (Kim, 2020). Also, there is an issue of class as people in irregular employment have limited benefits from it. Irregular workers are often explicitly excluded from legal, social security coverage such as unemployment benefits. Considering that many women are employed as irregular workers, policy can further aggravate not only gender inequality, but also inequality among different classes because the most benefited would be people who have stable jobs with higher pay. Since the policy is designed to benefit laborers in the paid labor market, the policy influence is also limited in the market. Therefore, the slogan of 'human-centered economy' in relation to work life balance policy can be understood as 'formal worker-centered economy', marginalizing many workers, disproportionately feminine, outside formal labor market.

Thus, the work life balance policy may benefit certain group of women in the formal economy, yet still not resolving informal discriminatory factors at paid work. At the same time, it may maintain public private dichotomy and place women in subordinated position inside families. Also, policy effects could be seriously weakened due to its limited policy targets, further marginalizing women not conforming to the heterosexual family model, laborers outside formal economy.

4.2 Women's empowerment in the work life balance policy

Among the discourses created by policy makers, the discourse of "realizing potential" embodies conceptualization of women's empowerment. Examples in the text of the "realizing potential" discourse include "a society where women can keep their lives and values while getting married, giving birth, and raising children", "workplaces more equal so that women of our society can freely show their competence.", "Women's career disruption is also a big loss for the nation. I will try to help them to fulfil themselves to the full". The need to empower women to realize their full capacity through employment is also in line with the way public support for career disrupted women is justified since unequal access to the labour market is understood to be unfair in the society as "fair opportunities and rules" was emphasized by the president.

Here, resources envisaged for women's empowerment is employment opportunities. This leads to a question if women will be empowered with these resources of access to labour market and income generation. Certainly, working women could benefit from the policy programs since reduced, flexible working hours and childcare support will allow them to have more time for care, leisure, and income. As Kabeer (2005) stated, providing resources, potential extra time, and income in the case of work life balance policy, could enable women to

exercise agency for final achievements. This institutional intervention for better work condition and care support can be viewed as an effort of the current government to render women more powerful and transform the society more gender equal. However, at the same time, I raise a question if income creation leads to women's empowerment and gender equality, why intimate partner violence constantly occurs among middle, upper-class women, who are highly educated, and possess enough material means. Aren't women with higher social status and income supposed to have power and exercise agency on par with men? Wietzman (2000 as cited in Kumar and Casey, 2000) points out that the privilege middle class women have makes them vulnerable and invisible in the discourse of intimate partner violence as they often deny the occurrence of sexual violence believing that it happens to women of low social class. The problem lies in the fact that the policy fails to understand and consider aspects of gender inequalities and need for changing power relations outside the realm of productive labor market, which clearly affects gender relations inside the labor market. As Collins et al. (1993) state, gender organizations of production, reproduction and sexual politics are closely interconnected. For example, having own income does not necessarily mean women's control of the income. While women participate in paid work, constantly being powerless, wage earned by women could be spent by other family members. The neglect of power relation could originate from the fact that increase in power is often understood to diminish that of another (Rowlands, 1995). Because, narrowly defined, women's empowerment and emancipation cannot be regarded beneficial for men because men are bound to lose power as women gain more. This way of understanding gender power relations is also manifested in the rising anti-feminism backlash against gender policy such as abolition of patriarchal family system, women's quota since many view the policy implementation as negative and detrimental for men's power.

Also, we need to examine the agency women could exercise with the reduction of working hours and support for childcare. This could be regarded as a preliminary step of meeting practical gender needs (Moser, 1989) to achieve strategical gender needs of more equal society. The way women's needs are understood is based on several factors of the way empowerment is conceptualized in the policy discourse. First, the resources, as medium of women's agency, are mainly material with institutional aspects restricted in the labor market. As the policy benefits are focused on laborers, the policy has institutional effects only in that domain and on people involved in the formal economy, leaving out the domains of family and community. Yet, Elson (1999) calls for caution with the assumption equating wage earning with women's empowerment first, because reduction of pay differentials could be achieved through "harmonizing down" (p. 616) placing more pressure and burden for women to provide for their families and second, even in the case of "harmonizing up" (p.617), women could be expected to bear bigger portion of financial burden from the income for families. Therefore, resources provided for women's empowerment in the policy discourse is limited as it does not include "the various human and social resources which serve to enhance the ability to exercise choice" (Kabeer, 1999 p.437).

Without interventions to challenge and transform gender norms, women's agency is bound to be limited. With the socioeconomic change in the second half of the 20th century and the growing purchasing power of women, the concept of women's empowerment has broadened to include trivial daily activities (Gill, 2008) to the extent that "Owning and wearing dozens of pairs of shoes is a compelling way for a woman to announce that she is strong and independent, and can shoe herself without the help of a man.", "Look out, male dominated world, here comes me and my shoes" (Klein, 2003 as cited in Gill, 2008). A question to pose here is if agency exercised for mundane activities accompany changes in women's status and rights in other areas of the society or if it remains as "faux empowerment" (Gill, 2008, p, 36) restricting women's empowerment in the domain of the market while rendering their status secondary in family and community. An empowered women due to the work life

balance policy could have more income to pay for childcare and to purchase clothes for herself and could still have limited power. Thus, the policy discourse focused on the labor market can create an illusion that women can freely exercise their agency while they are asked to be active and financially independent escaping from the passive femininity idealized in the past, and at the same time, to become supermoms adhering to the existing notion of women as primary caretakers. This way, the policy fails to articulate strategic gender needs for deconstructing patriarchy and establishing new gender norms.

Furthermore, women's empowerment conceptualized in the policy is in the same vein with neoliberal individualism advocating for realising human potential based on liberal individual will and efforts since the policy focuses on individual woman ignoring the fact that the realities and struggles women face cannot change with individual action. However, the intrinsic empowerment process cannot succeed at individual level, and it must include relational factors as "institutional transformation requires movement along a number of fronts: from individual to collective agency, from private negotiations to public action, and from the informal sphere to the formal arenas of struggle where power is legitimately exercised" (Ka-beer, 2005, p.16). The policy approach neglects social, relational aspect of women's empowerment by regarding women's empowerment as giving job opportunities to individuals and by holding each woman responsible for putting resources to the service of families and communities to bring about changes in gender relations. By viewing women as a powerless, struggling group of people who needs to be empowered by government support such as consulting service, vocational training, the policy could easily become one-time intervention, which can be assessed with the number of women who has participated in vocational training, the number of increased childcare workers or the amount of care provision provided. In this context, women remain as policy targets of government, which has power to decide to vest the public with rights. Neglecting women's voice and interests by homogenizing them with the discourse of 'career disrupted women' is problematic as real women have various needs and their needs differ depending on their socioeconomic environment and different identity in the society (Moser, 1989).

In sum, the government's conceptualization of gender equality is geared towards instrumental empowerment as the policy is designed to mobilize individualized women as paid work force, which allows them to have more access to material resources and consequently, contributing to the market economy. Thus, the policy fails to address the issue of gendered division of labor inside and outside productive labor market. Lacking cross-sectional approach and viewing women's empowerment as one-time intervention, the policy could reinforce existing gender norms and women's subordination. By addressing gender equality as individual issue and neglecting relational aspect of empowerment, the policy does not recognize power from within and overlooks the need to mobilize social, relational force of women to genuinely empower them. Excluding informal sector in the policy implementation based on public/private dichotomy could undermine the policy effects (Elson, 1999). Also, in the formal economy, neglecting the reality of the gendered market structure and discriminatory work culture, trained women, even with high education background, could encounter problems such as limited places to enter in the workplaces wanted by many. This could lead to marginalizing women rather than empowering them, reinducing more women to irregular market, continuously devaluing their labor with less social security, where they are already overrepresented.

Chapter 5 Preparing for a revolution yet to come

In this research, I unpacked the problem representation of work life balance policy of the Moon Jae-in administration of Korea by applying a discursive policy analysis, specifically WPR approach. The work life balance policy could be an important tool to render a society more gender equal as it has a great ripple effect with a broad policy scope affecting lives of both women and men. However, the problematization of lack of women's labor participation with purpose to boost market economy has limitations in realizing gender equity because while the "realizing potential" discourse in line with "Smart economics" (Chant and Sweetman, 2012) justifies investment in women as an effective development strategy, in conjunction with "contributing to the nation" discourse, the policy can still render woman's status in the society secondary and subordinated. Although there are active efforts to encourage fathers to participate in care work with certain incentive programs for paternal care leave and to expand public care provision, there is a lack of understanding of work in the way that the value of reproductive work is not acknowledged as work since they are not considered to contribute to economy and national competitiveness. Therefore, the policy direction anchored in developmentalism, not recognizing gender relations embedded in different social relations, the policy has limitations in transforming gender norms. By trying to mobilize maximum labor force of women for macroeconomic growth with individualistic measure, the empowerment envisaged by the policy actors is far from intrinsic empowerment, because without challenging patriarchy and changing gendered characteristics of the market, providing women with access to labor market is not a sufficient condition for empowering women and placing them on par with men. Neglecting the gendered division of labour and discriminatory practices against women, policy designed to lessen childcare burden and to provide occupational trainings will not lead to women's empowerment at work. Additionally, as Lee (2020) claims, for women's intrinsic empowerment, the policy should cover socially marginalized groups. Aiming to turning more women into citizen workers without any change could force them to bear potential gender penalty as employees as well.

More importantly, given that the private-familial domain is viewed "as the core of gender inequality and struggle for equality" (Koo, 2021, p. 1422), there needs to be more active policy action to transform the gender relations in families, which have long been regarded as private or personal matter, therefore excluded from public intervention. Without addressing work issues related with reproductive work in families with more gender sensitive programs incorporating diverse needs and voices of women, the current policy direction to encourage women's labor participation as a response to low fertility rate cannot have successful policy results because work life balance policy promoting a society facilitating childcare intends to share only a fragment of care burden of women laborers, still designating them as primary caretakers. Thus, the policy scope must be extended to the family expanding paternal birth, care leave and asking men to participate in all kinds of reproductive work, not limited to childcare, to genuinely change the society to a place where everyone can happily work and raise children.

Furthermore, it is urgent to adopt programs to raise awareness on gender equality and justice in collaboration with scholars and feminist organizations, which is directed towards all public, not limited to elites or academia. Men's gender ideologies could significantly influence effects of work-family policy as men respond to the interventions differently depending on their perceptions on male peers' preferences and behaviors (Thébaud and Pedulla, 2016). Thébaud and Pedulla state that masculinity is "fundamentally relational, contextual, and multidimensional" (p. 611) and it strongly affects men's preferences. This explains why it is indispensable to understand women's empowerment process as relational and social because gender roles are constructed in relation to the others and there are always certain influence of peers and community. Moreover, this finding has important implications for the case of

Korea as the country has experienced rapid socioeconomic change in the 20th century. There exists a big gap of understandings on gender relations and power inequality among public, which could be a source of gender conflict and moderating factor for supportive work life balance policy. Thus, nation-wide consciousness raising programs on gender equality are crucial as they can play a critical role in encouraging power within and power with women, also function as an avenue to prepare the entire society for the “stalled revolution” (Hochschild, 2012) and to finally bring about the revolution, which will change men to take part in traditionally “feminine” gender roles.

Besides, combined action of the government and citizens as well as institutions incorporating different voices of the marginalized women are indispensable to deconstruct existing gender relations. To do that, relentless efforts and new ways of mobilizing feminist voices are necessary more than ever because as Collins et al. (1993) mentioned, even with the rising feminist movements, the gender conflicts are likely to continue in different forms. Also, including citizenship and citizen activism in the regular education curriculum since young age is essential in order not to nurture citizens only as workers, but as community members who can relate to others and be involved in social, economic, and political activities freely regardless of their gender. Without active public intervention to change the informal gender norms of patriarchy and heteronormative assumptions encompassing all realms of the society, and to inculcate the public with equality and diversity, the policy is bound to lose power to bring about real change.

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