

KOREAN WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE'S ROLE IN ITS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY TO ADDRESS THE *GLASS CEILING*

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ABSTRACT

Violence in the environment and households often occurs on parties who tend to be weak and in this case gender-based violence is still a hot topic in some countries in the world and most of the cases are of international concern. The practice of cases of human rights violations and gender discrimination is still common among South Korean social society. Along with the times with the influence of globalization being its support, women are aware that their habits or culture that seem to degrade women or give full authority to men so that women are easily oppressed are the main basis for the many movements of women to protect their rights. With the Korean Women's Development Institute focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, its role is one of hope for women to establish their rights and become an alternative to empowering women themselves so that the problem of social inequality can be slowly addressed. Through descriptive methods and the theory of the concept of effectiveness, this paper will describe and illustrate KWDI's programs or strategies in improving the quality of women and the capabilities of its researchers who are more focused on the form of international cooperation relations. The results of this study, through KWDI's HR empowerment program, produce female researchers who are more able to exist in their social life with broad insights and good working skills so that women can compete with men, even though the change did not occur significantly, the efforts of KWDI's research still deserve appreciation for their positive progress.

Keywords: *KWDI, women, glass ceiling, south korea, gender equality, feminism*

INTRODUCTION

The problem of gender discrimination or inequality is a difficult issue and homework that must be overcome in some countries. With the scale of the problem is quite serious because it can affect various aspects. And South Korea is no exception, which although this country has been rated as a country whose economy and diplomatic development is quite rapid and good, but with these positive standards South Korea still cannot enter with its gender perspective. Where gender bias is still rampant in the social life of South Korean society (Baiq Nindy Anidia Agustina, 2022; R. Kim, 1994).

Although the flow of globalization in South Korea is considered quite fast, but with all the modernization that exists, South Korea is still difficult to get away from gender issues in the social life of their society. According to data obtained from the World Economic Forum's, in 2021 South Korea was named one of the countries with a high gender gap. Ranked 102 out of 156 countries in the same gender equality issue (World Economic Forum, 2021)

Basically, gender is indeed a sign of something differentiating from the role of each gender according to its nature and portion. However, the difference that will be studied is the difference in opportunities and opportunities and benefits that are biased towards gender, which falls into the word gender discrimination or inequality. In this reality, minorities, especially women, have various obstacles in their chances of reaching a strategic level in leadership and positions in organizations and jobs, which is referred to as the *Glass Ceiling* phenomenon. This *glass ceiling* phenomenon occurs in women with the main factor of the existence of this is not a matter of self-qualification in each woman, but they are women. (Baiq Nindy Anidia Agustina, 2022).

Through the foundation of this *Glass Ceiling* phenomenon, South Korea, the majority of whose people are misogynistic or adhere to Confucianism. This Confucianism has been inherent in the social and cultural life of South Korea since historical times, where they regulate all the division of roles between men and women. With women who are prohibited from doing many roles in their social environment. And women who are pegged with roles in reproductive affairs, household chores such as caring for children, so that the position of men becomes superior in the social environment. (Herlina, 2018). Thus placing the position of women who are dependent and under men.

According to the *Economist's Glass Ceiling 2021* data, South Korea is one of the countries with a rating of women who still have to choose between work or family. (The Economist, 2022). And ranks last out of 29 countries with an index of the role and women in the labor force. The data also includes indicators that affect women's participation in the workforce such as gender-biased wages, maternity leave, or childcare costs. Which through this data proves that patriarchal culture or the *Glass Ceiling* phenomenon in Korea still dominates the world of workers.

In the Korean labor force, the role of women increased in 1965 from 37.2% to 48.3% in 2000. (J. Kim et al., 2016).. The data shows that women are not treated equally in the workplace, accepted practices do not match current procedures. This results in fewer women

than men in leadership positions in the workplace. Data shows that gender inequality can be a very serious problem in Korea. In 2011, only 3.2% of Korean leaders were women, the rest were men.

Data provided by the World Economic Forum 2021 shows that men receive twice the income of women, namely between USD. 13,100 female income wages and USD 23,300 male income wages. The existence of gender inequality and discrimination should be eliminated, considering that the impact is quite large on the income of the country's social life. The underlying factor in the formation of gender inequality in the social world of South Korea is the persistence of the patriarchal system and the understanding of Confucian values among South Korean people so that it affects various aspects of life in South Korea. (Kumalasari & Rosyida, 2022).

The origin is about the Confucianism that is still embraced by most South Korean people who lead to gender that makes South Korean society so biased about gender which is then reflected in a strong patriarchal construction into it. (Herlina, 2018). Korean society, which adheres to Confucianism in various aspects of its life, fosters a view of gender differences in the eyes of Korean society with women being in a lower or inferior position compared to men. (LAILA INDARTI, Yuni Wachid Asrori, S.S., 2017)..

Then when women successfully graduate from top universities, the obstacle is the social environment in which they work, which is still considered patriarchal, which is quite burdensome and oppressive for modern women. Plus in 2020 where the impact of COVID-19 hit the whole world. As many as 30 percent of suicides among women in South Korea increased due to the social burden they bear from the impact of the pandemic. This is based on the fact that South Korea is a country that adheres to Confucianism. Not because there are many followers of this teaching, but its application in the daily lives of Korean people who influence South Korean society itself. With this, it is the support and foundation for the existence of patriarchy which is quite thick in South Korean society. (Yuliantini, 2012).

There are several previous studies that discuss the gender bias or patriarchal culture that exists in South Korean society. Through many different perspectives that support the existence of gender discrimination or problems in the modern country. Eka's research discusses gender ideology. Through her research on the representations found in one of the Korean dramas "Because This Is My First Life" at the end of 2017. In a Korean drama that has become one of the cultural images of Korean society, which ultimately represents based on social life with objects or circumstances that match reality. Which displays the ideology

of patriarchy and Confucianism and gender bias by South Korean society, especially in the work environment. (Herlina, 2018).

Then in previous research that describes how UN Women is an organization that is quite effective in its actions to address gender problems and issues that occur in the international arena fundamentally and deeply. In the main focus, namely visible physical violence, through UN Women programs, one of which is "Safe Cities Free of Violence against Women and Girls". Through this program, there is an increasing sense of mutual care for others by emphasizing that violence against women is a form of human rights violation that is quite serious, people's understanding is slowly starting to develop and understand that women are not someone who deserves to be treated with violence. (Ramadhan & Ma'sumah, 2018) This study aims to describe how UN Women's actions respond to existing cases and social inequality with a feminist perspective.

Referring to the renewal, this research will focus on how the role of the Korea Women's Development Institute as a domestic organization that focuses on development and gender equality in Korea with efforts such as UN Women, namely "*ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life*" to overcome gender inequality with its global policies. The author tries to examine how KWDI absorbs these references which are then applied specifically to non-verbal violence in the world of work, such as gaps in wages and opportunities in a position and position by looking through the lens of *Outward Looking and* organizational effectiveness theory.

METHODS

Through the descriptive method, the author will describe and illustrate how the role of the Korean women's development institute in responding to and dealing with gender-biased social inequality in the world of environment and work in South Korean society. This research method uses a descriptive qualitative method. Through data collection and analysis from literature study sources, bibliography, previous research or related article sources that are still relevant to the topic or case discussed regarding social inequality that occurs in South Korea, gender discrimination in the workplace, and the roles and strategies of KWDI in dealing with these practices.

Using the theory of the concept of effectiveness in South Korean civil society to see how KWDI's role can affect women's empowerment and uphold gender equality in South

Korea. effectiveness itself is a measure in an institution or organization to achieve positive progress and in the measure of problem solving. In this sense, effectiveness is an activity that is measured based on the adjustment between goals and expected achievements. (SYAM, 2020). In this case, we will look at the objectives of KWDI's role and the expected achievements in the South Korean society.

In this effectiveness theory, the author uses the theory of effectiveness according to Gibson. according to his view, the concept of effectiveness consists of three perspectives, namely individual, group, and organizational effectiveness. Individual effectiveness, emphasizes the duties and responsibilities of an individual as a worker of an organization. Where the success of an organization can be affected by the individual's performance. Group effectiveness, which is defined not far from the performance given by a group with individuals who become *team work*. Meanwhile, group effectiveness is the result of individual and group effectiveness in a higher number of achievements. (Yuniningsih & Kharisma, 2014).

This paper will focus on the theory of organizational effectiveness, because the variable or subject of this research is the Korean Women's Development Institute which is an institution or organization. Where the *goal or goal approach of KWDI* itself is to achieve conditions with minimal gender discrimination practices against women in South Korea.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the world of work, a woman, wife, or mother who works is only considered to work for a side or additional income for her family. so that this paradigm results in differences in salaries earned for women. Women are usually only paid less than men even though the work or position in the job is equivalent. (Baiq Nindy Anidia Agustina, 2022). The opportunities and potential that women have are often marginalized or displaced just because they are women.

Despite living in a modern and economically advanced country, the development of Korean women in this regard is still hampered by the assumption that women are more suitable to take care of their homes and families at home. (Mansour, 2016). This thinking is the result of Confucian values which then appear in the patriarchal practices of South Korean society. Along with the times and modernity of international and national society, it encourages women to also be able to exist in their social life as citizens. With the aim that they can be independent and not under the authority of men and want a better life than before.

Basically, the Confucian values that are inherent to Korean society mean the emphasis on humans to serve the country and its people. With ethical teachings in socializing and the state. With its basic stages in forming a good life order that must be able to control its family. (Dewi, 2016). However, during the Yi dynasty, this teaching emphasized patriarchal practices in the sense that they had to control their families in order to form a good environment and order. Which ultimately rooted in social roles that must prioritize gender in the division (Putri et al., 2019). (Putri et al., 2019). The development of the Confucian teachings of the Yi dissnation is the cultural heritage of South Korean society which has an impact on limiting women's space.

Korea Women's Development Institute's efforts

The Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) is a government think-tank organization dedicated to gender and family research in South Korea. KWDI aims to support the successful implementation of gender- and women-focused policies in South Korean society. By developing policy agendas and conducting data-driven gender research that incorporates gender perspectives into all ministries, KWDI aims to support the successful implementation of gender and women-focused policies in South Korean society. (Yookyoung Mun, n.d.). KWDI works in an inclusive society with the rapid development of socialization and globalization, so KWDI will continue to conduct various researches to achieve gender mainstreaming in Korean society. (Yookyoung Mun, n.d.). In leading an inclusive society with *Global Research* on gender equality, KWDI has several strategies with medium-long term internationalization of research capabilities until 2025. The strategies are carried out through international exchanges in policy discussions, international-scale research exchanges, global human resources by improving the quality and capabilities of members, global dissemination or publication of research results, discovery and activation of ODA research projects.

A. Efforts in the Domestic Domain

As one example of KWDI's role in the *Glass Ceiling* phenomenon that often occurs in male-dominated workplaces (Kossek et al., 2017). Recommending policies to achieve gender equality for female construction workers, as the construction industry is a male-dominated industry, it is difficult for women to obtain or maintain employment in the construction industry. Although it is difficult for women to enter the male-dominated construction industry, the proportion of women in the construction industry is increasing. KWDI

researches and analyzes the male-dominated work environment for potential and skilled women. By exploring policy measures that support women to enter male-dominated occupations and proposing ways to improve the employment environment for female workers.

Skilled female workers in the construction industry are employed in jobs that require relatively few and low skills. Therefore, they are paid less than men, even though they work just as well as men. On the job, men often get opportunities and chances to occupy more competent and skilled worker positions such as professionals, whereas women stay longer than men as unskilled workers. (Kyung-Hee Kim, 2020). Being located in the male-dominated construction industry, female workers are often subjected to sexual harassment and violence. In addition to gender bias in terms of employment, gender discrimination also occurs with a lack of awareness about the needs of female workers such as changing rooms and bathrooms on construction sites during the process of building work sites. Thus many skilled female workers are faced with gender discrimination and excluded from policy-making processes relevant to them.

Suggestions or recommendations proposed from the research are (Kyung-Hee Kim, 2020):

1. Enactment of support legislation for women in non-traditional occupations or those without long-term contracts. In order for women to enter male-dominated occupations, including the construction industry, to reduce gender segregation in the labor market, and to narrow the wage gap between men and women, independent laws should be enacted to help women participate in non-traditional occupations.
2. Expansion of training and development of female skilled workers in construction. Through a survey conducted by KWDI *research fellow* Mrs. Kim, women who also participate in their family's livelihood responsibilities have worked in construction because their previous jobs had relatively low wages such as service jobs, so they chose to work in construction because they knew the wages would be higher. However, attraction on this basis meant that women had no understanding of how to work in construction and had few learning opportunities to improve their skills. In male-dominated training classes, female workers are less comfortable and are often given fewer opportunities than men. So there is a need for female trainers so that they can receive more and better education and training so that the effect of their education will be better. In order for women to learn and improve their skills on

male-dominated construction sites, relevant programs should also be developed, such as the launch of weekend classes on skills upgrading education for semi-skilled female workers in the construction industry. There is also a need to implement leadership enhancement education programs for skilled female workers in the construction industry so as to support women in their roles as group leaders and team leaders. So that their potential and opportunities in career development are not always preceded by men.

3. Improvement of sexist employment practices and education on sexual harassment prevention. Understanding and education on sexual harassment prevention, which is considered prevalent, is mandatory in industrial health and safety education. This is necessary to create an environment where women can work alongside men in the male-dominated construction industry.
4. Provision of appropriate safety protection facilities and equipment for women. Regulations for installing facilities for workers should also be gender-based, such as bathrooms and changing areas. Male-centered safety protection equipment that does not suit women, threatens the safety of female workers, or interferes with women's job performance, so the stigma of women's less than optimal performance will continue.
5. implementation of gender awareness education for vocational counselors and systematic support for female construction workers. Appropriate measures should be implemented to support women interested in male-dominated occupations, including the construction industry, to access employment. When vocational counselors have stereotypes about gender segregation in employment, it is not easy for them to recommend the construction industry to women because construction is considered a male occupation. Therefore it is better that vocational counselors should provide advice for women to plan and prepare themselves for their possible jobs that match their interests and talents. In this application, vocational counselors should introduce occupations with a gender perspective and recommend skills training related to female workers and available occupations including one of the occupations in the construction industry.

B. Efforts on the International Stage

KWDI itself has a strategy to improve their network in order to advance research and policy related to women in South Korea. The strategy is an international cooperation project

that involves a cooperative relationship between KWDI's international development and cooperation center and international organizations related to KWDI's goals. These cooperation projects include organizing international conferences, sending delegations abroad, and inviting foreign experts to exchange information. Through this agenda, KWDI can strengthen its relationships, discover policy agendas, and promote its research globally. (KWDI, n.d.-b). UN Women also supports the Korean Women's Development Institute (KWDI) in promoting gender equality, which aims to demonstrate the role of women for the country and even internationally. In addition to helping the process of implementing gender equality, it also breaks the stigma that women who are considered unable to become leaders and inferior, can become figures who have a role in society.

In this institute KWDI also becomes a forum for its members to learn and develop so that they have more roles and great potential. KWDI collaborates with one of the *scholarship* programs, the Fulbright *scholar program*. Through KWDI, two members, Eungkyung Kim and Mi Lee, graduated from this program. (fulbright, n.d.-c) This program aims at long-term collaboration with international-based institutions and agencies to accommodate college education and research exchanges. So that it can benefit the institution that sends the delegation.

One of the advantages of working with Fulbright is that it is a long-term collaboration for both the institution and the delegates, so KWDI chose to develop the potential of its members through this program. Upon return, delegates can apply the curriculum with the cross-cultural perspectives they learned as well as facilitate international research and engagement opportunities on campus. (fulbright, n.d.-a). After becoming alumni of this program, in addition to providing greater insight and research to their home countries and institutions, these alumni can also connect with members of other international institutions. Through the insights and cross-cultural knowledge gained, they can still continue their role and involvement in their research in this program, (Eunkyung Kim, n.d.; fulbright, n.d.-b).

Another international networking effort is the Korean Women's Development Institute's cooperation with Japan's National Women's Education Center (NVEC) since 2006. In this relationship, NVEC conducted a survey research visit to KWDI's president, Dr. Keum Shook Choe. The visit was conducted as part of two research projects, Development System Study and Policy Recommendations for the support of women researchers - a comparison of Japan, China, and South Korea headed by researcher Fusako Utsumi and Empirical and practical research on women's career development - a complex

and career leaning career development process headed by researcher Michiko Kanda. After NWEAC conducted an interview with Ms. Seon Mee Shin, an academic fellow or research fellow for the Center for Human Research Policy, the outcome of the interview was KWDI's agenda or initiative to increase the number of female researchers in Korea.

During the visit, the NWEAC research team and Ms. Shin actively exchanged opinions and ideas on the background for various support programs for female researchers in Korea. (NWEAC, 2012). It was noted from the visit in 2012 that KWDI's efforts in increasing its female researchers to the highest period was in 2017 with 61 studies. Although after the impact the number of studies dropped quite drastically, from 2020 to 2022 it is quite stable with in 2020 28 studies, 2021 23 studies and in 2022 there have been a total of 22 *Research Projects* and reports shared by KWDI's official website with the researchers of the projects being Korean women.

KWDI Gender Forum

Official Development Assistance Forum (ODA)

In short, ODA is government assistance that focuses on economic development and welfare or as a forum for givers and recipients in the form of funds for the continued development of developing countries. Which ODA was adopted by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as foreign aid with the form or purpose of cooperation in 1969. (OECD, 2021). Since 2011 KWDI has also carried out a multi-year ODA research project with the theme of the Asia-Pacific Gender Equality Policy Infrastructure Strengthening Project. By actively participating in gender-related discussions in its international development cooperation, KWDI can find or get ideas related to gender maintenance especially in its application to South Korean social society. This ODA forum is one of KWDI's practices or efforts and strategies in expanding the discussion on gender in government policy considering that ODA is a government-supported organization with an international scale that can also expand the network owned and obtained by KWDI.

The KWDI & ODA Gender Forum takes place quarterly and offers a discussion forum for experts. Guests include government representatives, non-governmental organizations and various development cooperation experts who are invited to share information and experience. The forum will help KWDI to learn about current trends and agendas in development cooperation. It aims to develop KWDI's ODA research projects

that are more tailored to the needs of local communities, and ultimately to improve Korea's ODA as well. (KWDI, n.d.-a).

Global Engagement and Empowerment Forum (GEEF 2019)

The forum aimed at discussing women's empowerment for inclusive and sustainable development held by BKMC was also attended by KWDI president Kwon Insook as one of the speakers. The aim of the session was to raise awareness of the benefits of women's empowerment worldwide and create an environment where women can engage more actively in society by taking a much more proactive and collaborative approach at all levels of search. In this session senior female officials and leading professionals from around the world to share their experiences and insights on the great potential of women to contribute to economic growth and the importance of women's leadership and empowerment even in difficult times. Through this forum, ideas can also be created that can accelerate efforts to achieve gender equality with women's rights and human rights through discussions and debates among the international community. (BKMC, 2019).

CONCLUSION

Basically, South Korea is a fairly large and rapidly developing industrial country, so it is already clear that its economic development is good, but that is also what makes this country a country that is in a hurry and afraid of being left behind. This also happens to the people who are worried that their lives will be difficult if they are not graduates of famous schools or if they do not have good positions and wages in their jobs. The country is democratic but still has a strong patriarchal culture among its people and their behavior.

Although it is still not significant in reducing discriminatory practices against women in the work environment. And although the case and Confucianism is still a gender-biased understanding that is still dominant in South Korean society, the movement and innovation support from KWDI's research is quite effective and running well, slowly providing a glimmer of hope for women to continue to exist in their lives. Through developing their female human resources by recruiting female researchers and facilitating their empowerment by working with organizations that are aligned with their strategies, KWDI makes women more knowledgeable so that they can play an active role in the formulation of policies that carry gender values in them. It also puts women's capabilities in the workplace beyond doubt.

This must be appreciated and supported in the future, be it through the signing of regulations or cooperation that supports gender issues. The key to the realization of gender equality and welfare for these women lies in the programs carried out by institutions that bring a gender perspective into every state study, be it in the form of organizational work programs or cooperation projects between institutions.

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