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The Role of Social Support for Reemployed Women

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on social support as a part of social efforts to solve the question of how reemployed women can obtain financial and psychological stability in the face of difficult employment conditions during an economic recession. The study explores the relationships between social support, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention. 545 reemployed women participated in the study.

The results of structural equation modeling show that the three components of social support reduced emotional exhaustion and turnover intention of reemployed women. The findings indicate that social support can become a positive precedent factor that reduces employee emotional exhaustion, and the emotional exhaustion felt by women plays an important role in overall turnover rate.

The study contributes to understanding women's social behavior and psychology in their workplace and suggests how to successfully conduct internal marketing and manage human resource.

Keywords: Reemployed women; Social support; Emotional exhaustion; Turnover intention

1. Introduction

Recently, advanced countries world-wide, including Korea, are facing difficulties because of increases in unemployment and unstable employment. Particularly as the financial crisis extends around the world, the rise in both unemployment and unstable employment in each country are becoming increasingly pressing issues (International Labor Organization, 2015; Moon, 2011). Unemployment and unstable employment are not merely financial problems affecting a household; they also impose enormous social and personal psychological costs. Thus,

central and local governments around the world are making various efforts to resolve the employment problems in their local economies and to overcome the economic recession. Korea also has difficulties because of unemployment and unstable employment. More than a few people have had to quit their jobs due to parenting or retirement or have been abruptly laid off due to companies' economic problems.

In particular, because more and more women are entering the workforce and the average age of marriage is increasing, women's social status has improved and jobs where women can demonstrate their skills are increasing; however, the level of employment remains low. Although the utilization of women's resources is central to achieving sustainable economic growth, Korean women's careers show the typical M-curve phenomenon due to career interruptions due to marriage, pregnancy, birth and childcare. According

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to recent reports of the 'Characteristics of Job-Discontinued Women and the Present Conditions and Implications of Occupational Ability Development,' 82.5% of Korean job-discontinued women were cut off from their career at the age of 27, while in their first job. Of the married women aged between 15 and 29 who went through a break between jobs, including the unemployed, the reemployed account for only 54.3%. When re-entering the workforce, most job-discontinued women tend to find jobs offering inferior working conditions compared with their previous job. Women who changed jobs but stayed within the same field accounted for 41.4% of all reemployed women, while women who experienced downward movement comprised 35% (Kim, 2014).

Moreover, a particular side of the society continues to have a negative view toward reemployed women. For example, when reemployed women have to leave office during work hours to take their ill child to see the doctor, they frequently face the negative response of "That's the problem with working mom."

Furthermore, as most other new employees are in their 20s, reemployed women can be treated as 'outcasts' in workplace interpersonal relations, which may lead many reemployed women to have a hard time and thereby deciding to quit their jobs of their own volition.

Therefore, reemployed women are likely to switch or quit jobs due to the psychological difficulties caused by personal relations in the workplace, rather than financial difficulties. To resolve these employment-centered issues, all elements of society need to make an effort. Therefore, this study, as a part of a wide-scale social effort to resolve these problems, will focus on the issue of social support. Improved support for reemployed women from their superiors, colleagues, and family members is considered to alleviate their mental exhaustion and improve their work-life balance, thus reducing job turnover and resignation rates, and enabling them to regain financial and psychological stability. That is to say, this study will consider the role of social support, with a focus on the role of financial and psychological stability and companies' effective internal marketing resulting from hiring reemployed women in a period of economic depression, and identify the structural relation between emotional exhaustion and turnover intention.

II. Literature Review

A. Social Support as a Determinant of Emotional Exhaustion

Burnout is a phenomenon arising over the course of an individual's employment where that individual gradually loses ideals, energy, objectives, and interest (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980), and may be the process through which an employee's conduct and behavior gradually deteriorates due to stress arising from his/her job (Cherniss, 1980).

Burnout is an extreme state of exhaustion that can mostly be divided into emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and low accomplishment. Among them, emotional exhaustion can be seen as the central component of burnout, and the causal factor behind depersonalization and low accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined emotional exhaustion as an individual's feelings that his or her emotional resources are exhausted and consumed by excessive emotional duty; Burke and Greenglass (1995) said, it means the lack of energy that an individual feels his/her emotional resources exhausted by excessive psychological burden from job or demands, or in the other perspective, it means a state that an individual's emotion has been used excessively or become dry by the excessive contact with the others. This study considers social support as an important factor to reduce the emotional exhaustion.

Lin, Ensel, Simeone, and Kuo (1979) state that the social support is the support accessible to an individual through the social solidarity by the individual, group, and community and Larocco, House, and French (1980) defined social support as the many positive resources to be gained through an individual's various social relations. In addition, Cohen and Hoberman (1983) state, the social support means all positive resources that an individual can obtain from all his/her personal relations.

Therefore, this study defines social support as all positive resources provided through relations with others, approached in a structural aspect conceptually, and established superiors, colleagues, and family support as dimensions of social support.

Superiors can help their organizational members resolve problems, and this behavior helps members adjust to and maintain their organizational lives (House & Rizzo, 1972). This superiors' support is the subordinate personnel's

perception of the support they can receive from superiors among their various social support sources (Burke, Borucki & Hurley, 1992). Support by superiors can also help mitigate the mental and physical health problems that subordinate personnel can face (BhaGat, 1983). Superiors' support seems to comprise offering continued feedback and promoting career development as well as providing organizational members with resources necessary for job performance (Babin & Boles, 1996).

The term colleagues refers to people who work together in the same organization or the same sector, who may spend more time together than families do. Relations with colleagues are an important element that can be used strategically to improve employee conduct and boost productivity. Support by colleagues may refer to the extent that an organizational member perceives receiving attention, consideration, and support from colleagues, which is found to be significantly related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job stress levels, and turnover intention (Schaubroeck, Cotton & Jennings, 1989).

The family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood, or adoption, constituting a single household, interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social positions of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating and maintaining a common culture (Burgess & Locke, 1953).

Support offered by family can take many forms. For example, a family member significant to the recipient may care for, love, and respect the woman job-leaver, and help her have self-worth and believe that she belongs to networks of communication and mutual responsibility (Cobb, 1976). Kane (1988) said that social support is not a result or a resource but an interactive process through which a family develops versatility and resources in identifying and using resources available in its environment. That is to say, support from family may be the processes by which recipients feel they receive support such as attention, affection, care, and stability through interactions with family members. Moreover, as the reemployed women on whom this study focuses have to split their lives between work and home, their families will be an important source of social support.

The emotional exhaustion is closely related to social support. Social support has been proposed as being able to prevent or alleviate stress and to promote health (Cassel, 1976). Cohen and Wills (1985) point out, as the social

supports are negatively related to the causes of stress and psychological exhaustion, it takes a role of cushion for individuals stressed from various things not to be exhausted psychologically.

House (1981) reported that proper social support can relieve or prevent stress and help improve health. Kobasa and Puccetti (1983) found that even when experiencing extremely high levels of stress, managers who received social support from their firms had fewer stress-related symptoms than others who did not receive such social support. As a result, social support may contribute to an individual's health and well-being. According to Rigg, Day, and Adler (2013), Social support from an advisor influenced emotional exhaustion directly and indirectly through students' engagement.

Overall, reemployed women are expected to feel high levels of financial and psychological difficulty caused by personal relations in the workplace. We propose that, as part of social efforts to solve the problems facing reemployed women, support from their superiors, colleagues and family members can help mitigate their emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the following hypotheses are presented.

Hypothesis 1: Support from their superiors will lower reemployed women's emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 2: Support from their colleagues will lower reemployed women's emotional exhaustion.

Hypothesis 3: Support from their families will lower reemployed women's emotional exhaustion.

B. Emotional Exhaustion as a Determinant of Turnover Intention

Turnover intention means an organizational member's intention to give up their membership or employment and leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It can also be defined as an individual entertaining an intentional and pre-planned idea of leaving an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Chiu, Chien, and Hsiao (2005) define employee turnover as posing a considerable economic and psychological challenge to an organization. Turnover can lead to economic losses due to the need to select, educate, and train new employees and psychological conflicts between organizations.

Many precedent studies have found turnover intention

to be linked with emotional exhaustion. Low, Cravens, Grant, and Moncrief (2001) found that burnout symptoms such as emotional exhaustion were found to affect turnover intention, which is mediated by job satisfaction and commitment. Brotheridge and Lee (2002) found that the level of emotional exhaustion was able to predict the degree of turnover intention through job performance. If employees lacked the resources required for effective job performance, their emotional resources would be depleted faster, which in turn would eventually lead to voluntary turnover. Green, Miller and Aarons (2013) and Wang (2014) also suggested that emotional exhaustion was positively related to turnover intention.

As a result, in terms of the reemployed women on whom this study focuses, their intention to change or quit jobs expectedly increases not only by financial difficulties but also by psychological difficulties caused by personal relations in the workplace, i.e., due to emotional exhaustion. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated.

Hypothesis 4: Emotional exhaustion will have a positive influence on turnover intention.

III. Method

A. Research Setting and Data Collection

To verify the sets of hypotheses and study model, this study conducted a random sample survey that targeted reemployed women who are working in department store (50.1%), discount store (25.0%), bank (15.0%), and hospital (9.9%). A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed directly or through mail and 550 responses were received. A total of 545 responses, excluding responses that contained incomplete data, were used for the final analysis.

A large proportion of respondents were in their 40s (45.2%) and 30s (32.8%). In terms of respondents' educational backgrounds, college graduates accounted for the largest part, at 89.4%, and 55.8% had 2~5 years' experience working as salespeople.

B. Measures

This study selected construct factors as follows based on the previous researches and used 5-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal) to measure each factor.

First of all, in our study social support network comprises three groups: superior, colleague, and family (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). For superior support, 4-items from

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

	Characteristic	Sample(N = 545)	%
Age	30 to 39	179	32.8
	40 to 49	246	45.2
	50 or above	120	22.0
Education	high school graduate	8	1.5
	bachelor's degree	487	89.4
	master's/doctorate degree	47	8.6
	others	3	0.5
Working period as a salesperson	1 year or less	45	8.2
	2 to 5 years	304	55.8
	6 years or above	196	36.0
Workplace	department store	273	50.1
	discount store	136	25.0
	bank	82	15.0
	hospital	54	9.9

Anderson, Coffey, and Byerly (2002), Johnsson and Hall (1988), Singh and Sarkar (2009) were modified to fit this study. A sample item is, "My superior is supportive when I have a work problem." For colleague support, 4-items from Johnsson and Hall (1988), Mauno, Kinnunen, Makikangas, and Natti (2005), Singh and Sarkar (2009) were used. Items include, "My colleagues provide helpful information or advice." 4-items, for example, "When something goes wrong at work, I can talk it over with my family." from Procidano and Heller (1983), Singh and Sarkar (2009) were selected to measure family support.

To measure emotional exhaustion, 5-items from Maslach and Jackson (1981) were used. Sample items include, "I feel emotionally drained from my work." and "I feel used up at the end of the workday."

Turnover intention were measured based on 3-items from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh (1983), Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). For instance, participants were asked, "I often think about quitting my present job." and "I will probably look for a new job

in the next year."

C. Construct Reliability and Validity

The findings from the exploratory factor analysis of social support and other factors are as follows. Total variance explained was 74%. Overall factor loading values by measurement items exceeded the standards and were extracted as five factors set in a model in this study.

Construct reliability (CR) refers to the shared variation between the measured variables of one latent factor; if it is greater than 0.7, it is generally accepted to have a convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). As shown in Table 2, the minimum value is 0.857, which exceeds the standard, which in turn indicates that there is convergence validity between the measured variables.

This study applied Fornell and Larcker's (1981) measure to access the discriminate validity of the measurement. To satisfy the requirement of the discriminate validity,

Table 2. Results for Construct Reliability and Validity

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	α	AVE	CR
Superior support	1	.883						
	2	.904						
	3	.903				.916	.779	.933
	4	.719						
Colleague support	1	.844						
	2	.878						
	3	.873				.932	.860	.961
	4	.869						
Family support	1		.846					
	2		.882					
	3		.826			.898	.768	.930
	4		.831					
Emotional exhaustion	1				.603			
	2				.686			
	3				.723	.742	.549	.857
	4				.675			
	5				.663			
Turnover intention	1			.914				
	2			.857		.896	.710	.879
	3			.923				
Eigenvalue	3.380	3.289	3.097	2.551	2.479			
Variance(%)	16.900	16.447	15.486	12.757	12.397			

Table 3. Results for Discriminant Validity

	1	2	3	4	5
Superior support	.883**				
Colleague support	.484*	.927**			
Family support	.273*	.392*	.876**		
Emotional exhaustion	.381*	.389*	.455*	.741**	
Turnover intention	.012*	.093*	.059*	.261*	.843**

Note. * Correlations, ** \sqrt{AVE}

the square root of a construct's average variance extracted (AVE) must be greater than the correlations between the construct and other constructs in the model. The square roots of all constructs' AVEs in Table 3 of this study were also greater than the correlations among all constructs. Therefore, the discriminant validity of the measurement in this study was acceptable.

The findings from this confirmatory factor analysis showed all fit indices except χ^2 (GFI = 0.922, AGFI = 0.897, NFI = 0.938, RFI = 0.927, CFI = 0.959, RMSEA = 0.058) exceeded the standards. Based upon these results, the fit indices for the constituents of this study's model are acceptable.

This study used Cronbach's α , which is used for a scale comprised of a number of items that allows one concept to measure both the accuracy and the reliability of accuracy of the measurement tools. The findings from the reliability analysis of the measurement items for the factors demonstrate that Cronbach's α coefficients of all items range from 0.742 to 0.932, which indicates that an acceptable level of internal consistency is demonstrated.

D. Analysis of Structural Equation Model

For the estimations in its model, this study used AMOS 18.0 to estimate its structural equation models. In this study, the endogenous variable is social support and exogenous variables consist of emotional exhaustion and

turnover intention.

To examine the relation between social support and other factors, the structural equation models suggested in this study have been analyzed using a covariance structure analysis. The findings are as follows.

The fit index set in this study model is $\chi^2 = 486.209$ ($p = 0.000$). The other fit indices except this value (χ^2) are: GFI = 0.915, AGFI = 0.890, NFI = 0.934, RFI = 0.923, CFI = 0.955 and RMSEA = 0.060 and these values are in general acceptable. Taken together, the fit indices in this study model are acceptable.

The following Table 4 shows the analysis results of the final model, and as seen in the results, all research hypotheses were chosen, and demonstrate statistical significance. Examined in detail, the analysis results showed that support from superiors, colleagues, and family members all reduced reemployed women's emotional exhaustion. Moreover, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention were demonstrated to have a positive relation.

IV. Conclusion

This study began with the question of how reemployed women can obtain financial and psychological stability in the face of difficult employment conditions during an economic recession. To find the solution, this study

Table 4. Results of Structural Equation Model

	Hypothesis	Estimate	t-value	Result
H1	Superior support \rightarrow Emotional exhaustion	-0.215	-3.957($p = 0.000$)	support
H2	Colleague support \rightarrow Emotional exhaustion	-0.146	-2.576($p = 0.010$)	support
H3	Family support \rightarrow Emotional exhaustion	-0.327	-5.969($p = 0.000$)	support
H4	Emotional exhaustion \rightarrow Turnover intention	0.216	4.229($p = 0.000$)	support

examined the structural relation between sources of social support, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intention.

This study has academic and practical implications in that it illuminates how reemployed women show high potential for exposure to financial and psychological instability. Furthermore, this study investigated social support specifically by dividing it into support from superiors, colleagues, and family members, all of which can affect reemployed women. Lastly, this study suggests the way to help companies more effectively manage their human resources and conduct internal marketing by helping them to understand their employees' emotions and psychological situations.

This study on the effects of social support on emotional exhaustion and turnover intention revealed the following characteristics:

First, social support can become a positive precedent factor that reduces employee emotional exhaustion. Support from family members was found to have the greatest influence, followed by support from superiors, and then support from colleagues. In fact, women face more difficulties as they must do many things in two life aspects, namely work and home, at the same time. Therefore, support from their family at home is most essential for reemployed women. For example, support from a family that allows women to engage in social activities by sharing housework from family members will reduce the amount of fatigue from their jobs or personal relations. With regard to support at work, companies should prepare in-company programs to encourage team activities and strengthen staff solidarity beyond specific job roles, with the purpose of reducing female workers' emotional exhaustion by increasing support received from co-workers. For example company club activities such as joining photograph club and volunteering program with team members can reduce emotional exhaustion by providing opportunities for positive social relationship with superiors and colleagues.

Furthermore, companies need to develop welfare programs to support families that will enable women to use their abilities without worry for their families' welfare. For example, measures such as running an in-company day-care center, offering a resort facility for families to use, supporting educational expenses, and inviting families to cultural performances could all support families. Moreover, such policies can help families become interested in and encourage their involvement in the company activities, which will decrease the gap between

women's home and work lives, as well as foster family support for reemployed women.

Consequently, these types of support and considerations for female workers by a company will lead to self-development and a capability upgrade of female human resources, which will in turn result in successful internal marketing that improves productivity and overall corporate profits.

Second, reducing on-the-job emotional exhaustion felt by women plays an important role in reducing overall turnover rate. In other words, good management of psychological stress can reduce employee's emotional exhaustion, which is very important such as an economic incentive to reduce the degree of turnover and business interruption. In business management, sales staff turnover and business interruptions due to losses of human resources resulted in unexpected side effects due to the loss of an internal customer. Therefore, identifying the factors and causes of psychological stress and emotional exhaustion arising from both inside or outside business relations is important to better manage organization members and minimize employee turnover. In addition, if companies already have salespersons or organization members under stress or suffering serious emotional exhaustion, they should find effective methods to provide a variety of online and offline counseling paths to help these women relieve their stress.

Limitations

This study has limitations as follows, which could be topics for further studies in the future.

First, further studies need to expand the range of social support types that are examined. This study deals only with the support from superiors, colleagues, and family members; however, the roles of other people, such as friends and neighbors, can be important sources of support for women (Arling, 1976). These relatives are also useful of this reemployed women research.

Second, studies on male reemployment are also needed. The recent economic slump has led increasing numbers of men to reenter the workforce after retirement. Therefore, considering this development and expanding the scope of studies to include the older population will be necessary.

Thirdly, examining the effects of occupational stress is necessary to divide the study population into various

occupational groups. In particular, exploration of the stress felt by service workers, who have jobs requiring emotional engagement with customers, would be a significant study.

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