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How can family policies reconcile fertility and women's employment? Comparisons between South Korea and Sweden

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Abstract

South Korea has extremely low rates of fertility and labor force participation by women during their childbearing years, whereas Sweden has high rates for both. Variations in family policy models may explain differences in fertility and women's employment between the two countries. Drawing upon literature that examines the effects of family policies on fertility and women's employment, this paper compares childcare support for very young children and parental leave policies in South Korea and Sweden. Thereafter, we discuss the importance of providing stronger support for dual-earner rather than single-earner families to reconcile the two objectives of increasing fertility and women's workforce participation. Specifically, it is critical to: (a) enhance the quantity and quality of childcare services for very young children, (b) achieve gender equality in parental leave policies, and (c) reduce gaps in the accessibility and utilization of family benefits by working parents from different social classes.

Keywords

childcare support; family policy; gender equality; parental leave; South Korea; Sweden

Family policies are multidimensional; they include diverse aims. Among the countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), family policies have six common aims, as follows: (1) poverty reduction and income maintenance, (2) direct compensation for the economic cost of children, (3) fostering employment especially for women, (4) greater gender equality, (5) support for early childhood development, and (6) raising birth rates (Thévenon, 2011). However, aiming to increase both fertility and women's employment seems challenging because women's labor force participation often acts as a constraint on fertility (Rindfuss & Brewster, 1996). Depending on how family policy is constructed, countries may have different outcomes in fertility and women's employment.

In the mid-2000s, a clear divide became apparent among the countries that successfully reconciled fertility and women's employment (e.g., Nordic countries) and those that combined low fertility and low rates of women's employment (e.g., Italy, Spain, Greece, and South Korea) (Thévenon & Luci, 2012). The Nordic countries—Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland—have relatively high birth rates of 1.8 or 1.9 (OECD, 2013) and high labor force participation by women in the age range of 30–34 years at around 78 percent (OECD, 2012a). In contrast, South Korea (Korea, hereafter) has extremely low fertility rates,

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remaining steady at around 1.2 since 2003 and in 2013 dropped below 1.0 in the capital city, Seoul (Statistics Korea, 2014a). Korea also has a low employment rate of 53 percent for women in the age range of 30–34 years, that is, much less than the average of 69 percent in the OECD countries (OECD, 2012a). Considering that Korean women in the age range of 30–34 years have had the highest proportion of total births since 2005 (Statistics Korea, 2015a), only about half the population of Korean women work for pay in what would be their main childbearing years (30–34).

Differences between countries in terms of fertility and women's employment may be explained by variations in family policy models to support working parents. For example, even in the family policies of the Nordic countries, there are significant differences in practices and the scope of support for working parents (Gíslason & Eydal, 2011). Swedish family policies, in particular, have served as a good model for other countries, as they achieve high fertility and high women's employment by implementing novel elements (e.g., earning-related parental leave for both parents) for the first time in the world (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). Today in Sweden, there are a number of policies aimed at facilitating the combination of family and work (Andersson, 2008). With social and demographic trends in the early and mid-2000s, Korea has moved from a selective approach (e.g., support for low income families) to a universal approach to generally support all families (Chin, Lee, Lee, Son, & Sung, 2012). This shift in Korea, however, has not increased birth rates or women's workforce participation (Statistics Korea, 2014a; OECD, 2012a). Therefore, there is a need to analyze whether these current family policies reconcile the two objectives.

This paper aims to compare specific dimensions of family policies between Korea and Sweden in order to understand critical elements that are effective in enhancing fertility and women's employment and why family policies in Korea have not had such an impact. To identify specific dimensions for comparison, we draw upon earlier studies that have examined the effects of family policies on fertility and women's employment. Previous studies have suggested that the provision of childcare support for very young children decreases costs for couples and thus enhances fertility (Thévenon & Luci, 2012; Mörk, Sjögren, & Svaleryd, 2009; Gauthier 2007; Rindfuss, Guilkey, Morgan, Kravdal, & Guzzo, 2007). Other research has also highlighted the importance of providing parental leave benefits to decrease the conflict between work and family for working women, and thus enhance their employment opportunities (Korpi, Ferrarini, & Englund, 2013; Thévenon & Luci, 2012; Thévenon 2011; Ferrarini, & Duvander, 2010; Ferrarini, 2006). As such, we ask the following two questions: (1) How are the features and scope of childcare support for very young children in Korea and Sweden different? (2) How are parental leave policies in Korea and Sweden different? To answer these questions, we analyze secondary data from the two countries, such as national statistics, OECD statistics, and previous empirical findings. Our analysis may contribute to the redesigning of family policies in Korea and elsewhere, where one goal is to reconcile fertility and women's employment. Further, this study may generate scholarly discussions in the field of women's studies by showing how the policies may not have the intended effects for improving the status and work-family situations of women.

Linking family policies to fertility and women's employment

It is important to review existing literature to understand specific features of the policies, so as to make them effective and simultaneously enhance fertility and the employment rates of women. Gauthier (2007) provided a comprehensive review of the effects of family policies on fertility. She identified three main channels of influence through (a) a reduction in the costs of raising children, for example, via provision of adequate preschool services; (b) an increase in family income through cash benefits; and (c) an enhanced preference for having children, by lowering the perceived cost of having children. In short, providing preschool services or in-home childcare allowances to parents may reduce childcare costs, which in turn may enhance fertility (Mörk et al., 2009; Rindfuss et al., 2007).

Another line of research exploring the effect of family policies on women's working opportunities has focused on parental leave policies. Korpi et al. (2013) identified the key features of family policies and labor market contexts that generate different opportunities for women to participate in paid work *versus* traditional homemaking. These include earnings-related parental leave, paid leave, and their utilization both by men and women, father-specific quotas in parental leave, and women's status in the labor market. Given that Korea and Sweden have very different levels of fertility and women's employment, there may be considerable contrast in the provision of childcare support (preschool services and in-home childcare allowances) for very young children and the specific features of parental leave benefits and labor market contexts between the two countries.

Childcare support for very young children in Korea and Sweden

Sweden stands out among other OECD countries with high public spending on childcare services. Sweden spent 1.6 percent of GDP on childcare services for children not yet in elementary school in 2005, while the average proportion of the spending was 0.8 percent in the OECD countries and only 0.3 percent in Korea (Thévenon, 2011). Besides the quantitative gap in public spending for childcare services, there are substantial differences between Korea and Sweden in the scope and quality of support provided.

Preschool services: Accessibility and reliability of preschool services by types

An integral part of the Swedish family policies is a public preschool system, which makes working persons' roles as parents and paid workers compatible. A public preschool system was not available until a large number of women started to work outside the home in the 1960s. Since then, Sweden has experienced great demand by women workers for the expansion of public childcare facilities. For example, in 1963, only 3 percent of all preschool-aged children were in public facilities, while 36 percent of all mothers with preschool-aged children were in the labor market (Nyberg, 2004). However, the expansion of the public sector in the 1970s not only created more job opportunities for women (Stanfors, 2003), but also produced highly subsidized childcare of good quality that served as a basis for building a welfare state, based on dual earner families (Lundqvist, 2013). Public daycare was first available for working parents and later, daycare centers and playschools were combined into a preschool system. Today, public preschools are available to all children regardless of their parents' activity, with a guaranteed place and a cap on

costs. There is assurance of a placement within three to four months after an application is made for all children above the age of one year. Parents' fees cover only around 8 percent of the cost for preschools (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009). Owing to national legislation that supports the preschool system, nearly 95 percent of all children aged 3–5 are enrolled in a type of preschool (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012) and approximately 81 percent of all enrolled children attend a municipal (public) preschool (see Table 1).

In contrast with Sweden, availability of reliable preschool services remains low in Korea. The total enrollment rate in preschools for children aged three to five is approximately 83 percent, which is similar to the OECD average (OECD, 2010). However, the majority are enrolled in private facilities mostly due to the inadequate number of public preschools. As of 2012, only 5 percent of the total preschools were run by public entities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). And as can be seen in Table 1, this number only covers 10 percent of all children aged 0–5 who are enrolled in a type of preschool. Note also that the provision of workplace on-site childcare (i.e., employer sponsored childcare center) is even lower at 2 percent, as the availability is limited to parents who work for large companies, for example, those with more than 300 women employees. Private preschools may be an alternative to the lack of public and workplace on-site facilities, but this is not the case in Korea. Surveys of parents indicate they are not satisfied with the quality of care in private preschools, specifically due to the extra fees they demand, poor health management, and unhealthy snacks and meals (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). Moreover, private preschools are more expensive than public ones. The average fee for a private preschool is 1.5 times higher than a public preschool (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). As a result, as many as 100,000 Korean parents with young children were awaiting admission to public preschools in 2012–2013 (Sung & Lee, 2013). The average waiting time for public preschools in regions with intense competition (e.g., small and medium sized cities) was 11 months in 2012 (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012).

The quality of care in private preschools would be improved by adopting a national standard for rearing and educating very young children; for example, Sweden has a national standard pedagogical goal for early childhood development (Bergqvist & Nyberg, 2002). The national curriculum applies to private preschools as well as public ones, demanding high-quality services overall (Sheridan, Giota, Han, & Kwon, 2009). The majority of the staff members in Swedish preschools are educated as preschool teachers or carers (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). It is also noteworthy that municipalities support private preschools financially and fees are standardized for all (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2009; 2012). However, the Korean government lacks the authority to demand improvements in care provided by private preschools, presumably because they do not provide financial support to them (Song & Kim, 2013).

The lack of reliable preschool services leads to the serious issue regarding care of very young children in Korea. Given that the total enrollment rate in public preschools is only around 10 percent (see Table 1), it is not surprising that the public preschool coverage for the very young is only around 5 percent on average (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). This contributes to working mothers' concerns about childcare, which may in turn, lead

them to delay having children in the first place or quitting their jobs after having them. Indeed, a quarter of working mothers in Korea quit their jobs after having children, citing the lack of reliable childcare facilities as the main reason for doing so (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012).

In-home childcare allowances

Allowances for childcare at home have been used as a type of means to decrease overall childcare costs (Gauthier, 2007; Mörk et al., 2009). However, there have been reports about the negative implications of monetary childcare support on the labor force participation by mothers in countries like Norway and Finland (Schøne, 2003; Yun, 2013). In Sweden, some municipalities have up until 2016 offered the child home care allowance of SEK 3,000 a month (about USD 382)¹ (see Table 1). However, this has rarely been used, mainly because it cannot be combined with other social transfers, such as unemployment benefits, social welfare or parental leave by the household (Duvander & Ellingsæter 2016; Ellingsæter, 2012). Moreover, other family benefits clearly motivated women to seek employment by providing earning-related allowances as well as protecting working mothers to get public preschool services within a reasonable waiting time.

In Korea, the early childcare budget increased by approximately seven times between 2002 and 2007 (Bang, 2009), but the Korean government has mainly focused on providing *in-cash* support for parents rather than establishing good infrastructure for public preschool services (Hong, 2008). In 2013, the Ministry of Health and Welfare in Korea implemented a new scheme to provide financial support to all parents with children aged 0–5 even if mothers are not working (see Table 2). Cash support is provided, the amounts depending on the children's age and enrollment status in preschool. Support for all parents regardless of maternal employment status is a commendable step forward to addressing low fertility rates. Nonetheless, this policy has inadvertently increased the pressure for places in public preschools, as many non-working mothers have sought to enroll their children. They cite several reasons for doing so, including development of their children's social skills (39.3 percent), provision of better education (30.9 percent), relief from their own childcare burden (15.3 percent), and the full utilization of the childcare subsidies (3.3 percent) (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). The cash support has brought non-working mothers into the market for preschool places, thereby making employed mothers apprehensive about getting their children into public preschools.

Among the Korean mothers who keep their jobs, informal childcare at home by grandmothers or hired caretakers is widely practiced (Lee & Bauer, 2013; Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2009; Yun, 2015). However, using individual strategies to deal with the lack of reliable preschools, such as relying on the informal support of grandmothers, cannot be an ultimate solution to the low fertility problem. The availability of grandmothers may decline in the future as more women stay in the labor force when they become grandmothers, which has been the trend in other countries (Gray, 2005). Moreover, the new generation of Korean grandmothers is often reluctant to take care of their grandchildren. Like western

¹The exchange rate of 0.1273 was applied to convert Swedish Krona (SEK) into US Dollars (USD). The exchange rate was retrieved from Thomson Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/finance/currencies/> on 30 December 2014.

grandmothers, they want to pursue personal interests in their later lives and not perform extensive childcare (Kim & Chung, 2011). Furthermore, although working women may appreciate the practical benefits of childcare by grandmothers, both working women and their mothers perceive such care as sacrifice by grandmothers regardless of any financial compensation they may receive (Lee & Bauer, 2013). As such, working mothers' individual strategies to juggle work and childrearing, given the short supply of reliable childcare services, seem ineffective for decreasing childcare costs.

Leave policies and labor market contexts in Korea and Sweden

Parental leave encourages working women to maintain their careers while enabling them to have an interlude for the care of young children. Both Korea and Sweden have policies for leave benefits for mothers and fathers. However, the two have different levels of fertility and women's employment during their childbearing years, which may be related to variations in the said policies. Another related domain that needs to be compared is women's status in the labor market. It can be seen that the two countries differ in the extent to which they provide opportunities for working women to utilize existing policies for leave without potential discrimination and, further, for lower class women to have equal access to leave (Korpi et al., 2013).

Table 2 compares the leave policies of Korea and Sweden. Beginning with Sweden, Swedish family policies support both parents to spend time with their children, right from the start. All parents have the right to (a) take maternity/paternity leave around the time of delivery, (b) avail of a long period of parental (or childcare) leave during which they receive 77.6 percent of their income for 13 months per child and a flat rate of SEK 180 (USD 23) a day for another 3 months, and (c) take temporary leave for sick children aged 0–12, which provides up to 120 days off per child per year with 77.6 percent of the normal earnings per day (Duvander, Haas, & Hwang, 2014). Note that these policies view job protection and benefits to be related to earning in order to provide strong incentives for both parents to seek employment before and during parenthood.

In Korea, government agencies and stock market listed corporations have leave policies associated with childcare, such as maternity/paternity leave and parental leave. Specifically, Korean employed mothers are entitled to a 90-day maternity leave around the time of childbirth. Typically, the first 60 days are fully paid and the remaining 30 days are partially paid by the government employment insurance fund (with the fixed amount of KRW 1,350,000; USD 1,228).² Since 2008, fathers have been eligible for 3–5 days of paternity leave after childbirth: 3 days are paid and 2 are unpaid. Employed Korean mothers and fathers can also request a partially-paid parental leave (40 percent of the monthly salary with the ceiling of KRW 1,000,000 or USD 910 per month, paid by the government employment insurance fund) for up to one year. They can use the leave whenever they want until the child's sixth birthday, but it can only be divided into two periods and the interval between the two cannot exceed one year (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2013). These policies have

²The exchange rate of 0.0009 of Korean Won (KRW) to one US Dollar (USD) was used and retrieved from Thomson Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/finance/currencies/on> 30 December 2014.

not motivated women to have children, because the benefits remain far below the average salary (KRW 2,203,688; USD 2,005 per month) of employed women in the country (Statistics Korea, 2014b). Moreover, there is no guarantee that they can go back to the same job position after they take such leave.

Utilization of leave

In Sweden, the right to avail of family leave is perceived as an individual one and to be used by women and men alike (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). Most women leave work during the month before delivery, and most fathers take 10 days' paternity leave when the child is born (Duvander et al., 2014). With regard to the use of parental leave, practically all mothers and 9 out of 10 fathers use part of such parental leave due to them (Duvander & Johansson, 2012). In addition, most employed parents are covered by collective agreements whereby they get extra compensation so that income loss during parental leave is minimized (Duvander et al., 2014). For example, all state employees receive an extra 10 percent, adding up to 90 percent of what they earn while on leave.

Compared with Sweden, Korean leave benefits are not well utilized. If we look at the percentage of women who take maternity or parental leave, it is quite a small proportion of women of childbearing age in the workforce. For example, according to data from the Korean Women Manager Panel Survey ($N = 2,361$ from 341 organizations), only 9.9 percent of working women availed of maternity leave in 2012 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012a), and an even smaller percentage of women (5.2 percent) took parental leave in 2011 (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012b). Although we do not know how many of them had children, the usage rates are very low given that 53 percent of Korean women between 30–34 years (i.e., part of childbearing age) have jobs (OECD, 2012a). Studies show that low rates of use are due in part to women deciding to quit their jobs after getting married or having children. According to nation-wide statistics, 20.1 percent of married women quit their jobs, reporting that their decisions were made after marriage (45.9 percent), after childbirth (21.2 percent), or because of childcare issues (29.2 percent) (Statistics Korea, 2014a). Some working women may also have decided to delay marriage or childbearing in order not to interrupt their careers. In any event, working women are making individual choices between work and family without utilizing existing benefits, which contributes to the low fertility and low employment of women in the childbearing ages (OECD, 2007).

Fathers' quota in parental leave

Swedish parental leave includes a father's quota for the length endorsed as fathers' participation in childcare. When parental leave was first introduced in 1974, men used only 0.5 percent of parental leave days and so it continued to be used mostly by mothers until 1995 (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2010). However, fathers' availing of parental leave has generally increased, after a series of "Daddy-Month" reforms were passed with the aim to incentivize men to take more parental leave (Duvander & Johansson, 2012; Ekberg, Eriksson, & Friebel, 2005). There was one Daddy-Month in 1995, and this was extended to two months in 2002 and three months in 2016. Of the total 16 months of parental leave due,

these cannot be transferred to mothers and had to be forfeited if not used by fathers. In addition to the reforms, a gender equality bonus was introduced in 2008, in order to give extra tax credit to parents who shared the leave more equally (Duvander & Johansson, 2012). The extent of parental leave availed of by men increased to 24 percent in 2012 (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2013).

In contrast, current Korean policies do not provide a quota for fathers in parental leave. A three-month long full-time equivalent of paid parental leave is available to fathers in Sweden, but not so in Korea (Thévenon, 2011). Given that there is no legislated father-specific quota of parental leave, it is not surprising that almost no use is being made of parental leave by fathers. In 2010, less than one man (0.08) and on average per Korean organization requested parental leave (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2010).

Providing a father-specific quota in parental leave may increase the use of such leave by both fathers and mothers. If the fathers' share in the use of parental leave becomes similar to that of mothers, working mothers may perceive less discrimination by their employers against the use of leave. This may be particularly true in the Korean workplace where traditional gender role ideology is pervasive. For example, in a qualitative study, Kim and Faerman (2013) found that women employees indicated they would be reluctant to take advantage of the parental leave policy because they would lose ground in their careers and be relegated to trivial jobs on their return to the workplace. Not only women, but men employees also felt they would be stigmatized and be seen as "unmanly" if they were to avail of parental leave. These kinds of concerns would be reduced if there is legislation for father-specific leave.

In Sweden, the idea of fatherhood has changed over time and today caring for children is a major part of it (Johansson, 2011). The norm for the ideal male employee is to be directly involved in childcare as well as being productive at the workplace (Bergman & Hobson, 2002). Although some work contexts, such as small, private, and male-dominated workplaces may inhibit the use of parental leave by fathers (Bygren & Duvander, 2006), most men take one to two months of parental leave, and those with high levels of education avail of longer leave (Hobson, Duvander, & Halldén, 2006). The men who do not do so are typically those who are unemployed or have low earnings, probably because they would receive fewer benefits during parental leave (Duvander & Johansson, 2014). As father-specific leave is an important feature of parental leave policies in nearly all the Nordic countries and serves to facilitate gender equality, the Korean government could consider a similar model.

Women's status in the labor market

The low birth rate and low labor force participation by women in Korea may be related to lower status of women than men in the labor market. The bottom panel of Table 2 compares Korea and Sweden regarding several indicators that represent women's status in the labor market. Korea has a larger gender wage gap than Sweden and this was the largest among all the OECD countries, at 36 percent (OECD, 2016), which may contribute to low fertility and low employment by women of childbearing age (Borck, 2014). Moreover, 40 percent of all

women employees held temporary employment positions in 2015, a large proportion of whom had lower educational qualifications (Statistics Korea, 2015b). Temporary employees are often excluded from leave benefits (Koo, 2007) and thus a considerable proportion of Korean women employees did not have access to leave benefits. This comparison clearly indicates that women's relative position in the labor market is much lower in Korea than in Sweden, which may act as a barrier for women to have children while keeping their jobs.

The labor market context itself also acts as a bolster or barrier for how family policies affect women's choices regarding childbearing and maintaining employment. Indeed, one of the main barriers in the use of existing leave programs in Korea is the unsupportive workplace culture (Kim & Faerman, 2013; Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2012b). Korea has a hierarchical, hard-working, and gender-stereotyped culture that is heavily influenced by Confucianism (Kim & Faerman, 2013; Yang & Rosenblatt, 2008). These elements, in turn, affect the milieu of the workplace as well. Bae (1997) found that most Korean management styles are authoritarian or patriarchal, characterized as not supportive of employees' taking time off for maternity/paternity leave and parental leave. In addition, the ethos in the Korean workplace involves working long hours, which aggravates work-family tensions. In Korea, how much time an employee spends in the workplace is a critical indicator of his or her commitment to work (Choe, Bumpass, & Tsuya, 2004). In 2011, Korean employees worked 2,090 hours (44.63 hours per week), while an average employee in the OECD countries worked 1,765 hours (38.41 hours per week) and only 1,636 hours (36.46 hours per week) in Sweden (OECD, 2012b). Longer work hours in Korea may make it difficult for women to find a way to balance work and family and for men to be involved in the care of their children.

The Swedish labor market context guarantees their employees' (both women and men) rights to obtain family leave. There are strong laws against discrimination based on gender and the use of parental leave. Working parents in Sweden can take their cases to courts if they are subject to unfair treatment (e.g., reduced opportunity for promotion or salary increase) while using the existing family-friendly policies. However, even though there are some instances of unfair treatment, very few Swedish employers say they have negative views about their employees' use of parental leave (Haas & Hwang, 2009). Swedish employees are also more likely to feel their supervisors and coworkers have open-minded attitudes about availing of parental leave, compared to employees in other European countries (European Opinion Research Group, 2004). This type of legal and informal support in the Swedish labor market enables working parents, especially women, to balance their work and family lives more easily than in other countries, including Korea (Korpi et al. 2013; Thévenon, 2011; Gauthier, 2007; Hoem, 2005).

Conclusions

Drawing on previous literature that examines family policies (Korpi et al. 2013; Gauthier 2007), we expected that differences between Korea and Sweden in childcare support for very young children and parental leave policies would be linked to different levels of fertility and women's labor force participation. Our comparison showed that Sweden has provided stronger support for dual-earner rather than for single-earner families, while Korea has

provided universal support for all families. It is clear that Sweden has established an accessible and reliable preschool system to support working parents, whereas Korea has focused largely on providing cash support for all parents. Moreover, Swedish parental leave policies have successfully promoted gender equality under the dual-earner and dual-carer model, while the Korean policies have failed to encourage gender equality, evident in the low utilization of leave and with no quota for fathers in parental leave. In addition, there were larger gaps in the accessibility and utilization of family benefits between social classes in Korea than in Sweden, which calls for a more active role for the Korean government in protecting the rights of employees in lower class groups to use the benefits against potential discrimination. Based on our systematic comparison, we visualize implications for Korea and other countries on how family policies can enhance fertility and women's employment.

First, improving the quantity and quality of preschool services should be a basic step towards providing solid support to dual-earner families. While Sweden has focused on delivering accessible and reliable preschool services, Korea has concentrated on giving in-cash support. An accessible and high quality preschool system is critical in order to decrease working women's concerns that are strongly linked to their decisions to have children as well as maintain their jobs after childbirth (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2012). An accessible preschool system may be accomplished in a shorter time-frame rather than providing quality childcare, although the government needs to allocate money from the public budget with the political consensus for building more public preschools. Achieving a high quality preschool system would need considerable time because it requires the establishing of a national standard for the quality of care that applies equally to public and private facilities (Sheridan et al., 2009; Bergqvist & Nyberg, 2002). After the society is ready to take public responsibility for the care of its youngest children with accessible and reliable preschool services, other types of support, such as in-home childcare allowances, would become effective to increase birth rates while not discouraging women to go to work.

Second, solid support for dual-earner families also requires achieving gender equality via parental leave policies. Father-specific leave can create a power incentive for men to use more parental leave days, and increase their participation by availing of leave they are entitled to. This would also be critical for reducing the conflict of work and family for working mothers as it would encourage gender equality in childcare. Sweden has made a number of reforms in order to encourage fathers to take such leave, and thereby the Swedish fathers' share in availing of parental leave has been rising (Duvander & Johansson, 2012). A few countries, such as Iceland, Germany, and Portugal have recently increased the number of weeks of paid leave for fathers and as a result, they have successfully raised the amount they actually avail of (Thévenon & Luci, 2012). The Korean government may need to consider incorporating a father-specific quota in parental leave in order to encourage them to avail of such leave, given that in any case the mothers' utilization of leave is low, while fathers take almost no leave. In addition, earnings-related benefits can encourage women to continue working with benefits based on each parent's employment status. For example, Swedish parents without employment and no previous income receive a flat rate of parental leave benefit of SEK 250 (USD 29) a day for 480 days (Duvander et al., 2014). As this is much less than what women who had been in the workforce receive, there is a strong incentive to seek employment or to stay employed after having children, especially for mothers who

avail of parental leave the most (Duvander, 2008). Indeed, only less than 3 percent of Swedish-born women receive benefits at the flat rate (Swedish Social Insurance Agency, 2013).

Lastly, given the large gaps in the accessibility and utilization of family benefits between social classes, greater intervention by the Korean government is needed to help employees in the lower levels of employment. More specifically, the government needs to protect the rights of vulnerable employees in order to frame family policies that will curtail potential discrimination by employers. Low paid employees are also less likely to have access to family benefits, which may be worse than discrimination. The role of the government seems particularly important for countries like Korea where the workplace culture is unsupportive of availing of family benefits, given the traditional gender role ideology that is pervasive in society. In many western countries that have generous child welfare and workforce policies, trade unions have played a major role in protecting workers' rights. In Korea, however, trade unions are weak. The proportion of trade union members is very low (9.9 percent) in Korea as compared to Sweden (67.5 percent) (OECD, 2014). To protect the rights of vulnerable employees, the government may need to play the role of "mediator" between employees and employers. Note also that even in Sweden, where egalitarianism has traditionally been discussed (Nyberg, 2002), women and men in the lowest employment positions have fewer opportunities to use the benefits given by their policy, such as long leave and reduced work hours (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). It is anticipated that in Sweden disparities of gender and class are widening. For example, the labor market in Sweden is gender-segregated with women working in less well-paid jobs in the public sector, often in service and care work. Statistically speaking, women face discrimination, in that fewer reach the top positions (Bygren & Gähler, 2012). Income polarization is also steadily increasing in Sweden (Ferrarini & Duvander, 2010). Given that both employees and employers are embedded in a larger social context that influences their behavior, governments should take the lead in encouraging gender and class equality in every way. For example, governments may become involved in increasing women's participation in policy making and, by extension, in educating the younger generations about the value of gender and class equality. Each country needs to consider how they can create legal, cultural, and informal support systems for individuals in vulnerable positions along with family policy support in order to eliminate potential inequalities within and between families.

In conclusion, this paper has compared details regarding the features of family policies of Korea and Sweden in how they reconcile the two objectives of enhancing fertility and women's workforce participation. Our comparison has illuminated the importance of providing solid support for dual-earner families, by enhancing the quantity and quality of preschool services, achieving gender equality via parental leave policies, and reducing gaps in the accessibility and utilization of family benefits between social classes. These features may be achieved by adopting a clear model of family policy that promotes equal opportunities to work and equal responsibilities to care between women and men, rather than relying on individual choices and labor market dynamics. Future studies should continue to examine how changes in such aspects would influence fertility and women's labor force participation. It may take time to see the impact on national-level indicators, but well-designed family policies will make the goals more accessible.

Biographies

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Table 1

Comparison of preschool enrollment rates by types between Korea and Sweden

	Korea (%)	Sweden (%)
Public	10	81
Private	77	15
Workplace on-site	2	0
Other ¹	11	4

¹Other preschools include preschools affiliated with social welfare corporations and collaborative care between neighbors. The enrollment rates were calculated by the authors.

Source: Ministry of Health and Welfare, Seoul Korea, 2012; Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012.

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Table 2
Comparison of childcare support, leave policies, and women's status in labor market between Korea and Sweden

	Korea		Sweden	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
<i>Childcare Support</i>				
Subsidies to preschools		Only to public and workplace on-site preschools		All preschools
In-home childcare allowances		Up to age 5 Universal		Up to age 3
		Amount varies by child age and enrollment status in preschool; Larger subsidy for children enrolled in preschool than for those not enrolled in preschool		Available for mothers not in the workplace Up to SEK 3,000 (USD 382) ² a month; This policy was abolished in 2016
<i>Leave Policies</i>				
Maternity/Paternity leave	3–5 days total 100% of previous income for 3 days	3 months total 100% for the first 2 months; A flat rate of USD 1,228 ¹ for the last month	16 months total 77.6% of previous income for 13 months; A flat rate of USD 690 ² for the remaining 3 months	
Parental or temporary leave	Provides up to 1 year; It can only be divided into two periods and the interval between the two cannot exceed 1 year 40% of the monthly salary with the ceiling of USD 910	For any children aged 0–6	For sick children aged 0–12 Provides up to 120 days off per child per year 77.6% of previous income	
<i>Women's Status in Labor Market</i>				
Employment rate (% for age 15–64, 2015)	75.7	55.7	77.0	74.0
Share of temporary employment ³ (% , 2015)	26.5	40.2	13.4	17.6
Gender wage gap ⁴ (% , 2012)		36.3		15.1
Share of employed who are managers (% , 2012)	2.9	0.5	7.1	4.3
Female share of seats in national parliaments ⁵ (% , 2012)		15.7		45

¹The exchange rate of 0.009 was applied to convert KRW into USD.

²The exchange rate of 0.1273 was applied to convert SEK into USD.

³Temporary employees are those dependent employees with a temporary or fixed term job contract.

⁴The gender wage gap is unadjusted and is defined as the difference between median earnings of men and women relative to median earnings of men.

⁵OECD average of female share of seats in national parliaments was 26.5.

Source: Information on childcare support and leave policies was drawn from Duvander et al. (2014), Duvander and Ellingsæter (2016), Ellingsæter (2012), Ministry of Health and Welfare, Seoul Korea (2012) Health and Welfare, Seoul Korea (2013), and Swedish National Agency for Education (2012); Data on women's status in labor market extracted from OECD.Stat, Statistics Korea, Statistics Sweden (Accessed on 09 April 2016)

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