

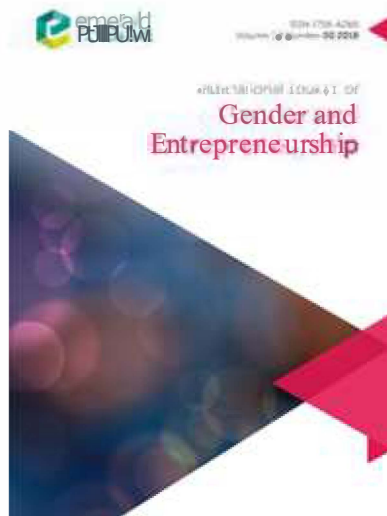
KIM, A. and NG, P.Y. 2023. Gender inequalities in Korean family business: contradictions between show and tell. *International journal of gender and entrepreneurship* [online], 15(4), pages 388-417. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-12-2022-0225>

Gender inequalities in Korean family business: contradictions between show and tell.

KIM, A. and NG, P.Y.

2023

© 2023, Emerald Publishing Limited. This author accepted manuscript is deposited under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC) licence. This means that anyone may distribute, adapt, and build upon the work for non-commercial purposes, subject to full attribution. If you wish to use this manuscript for commercial purposes, [please visit Marketplace](#).



**Gender inequalities in Korean family business:
contradictions between show and tell**

Journal:	<i>International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship</i>
Manuscript ID	IJGE-12-2022-0225.R2
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Family business, Female employment, Gender, Chaebol, Annual Report, Culture

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Gender inequalities in Korean family business: contradictions between show and tell

Abstract

Purpose: This paper explores how gender-related issues are communicated in Korean family-run conglomerates (*Chaebols*) and the roles of women within these businesses. It also addresses to what extent the communication of *Chaebols* about female employment and career development reflects the perception of gender representation in these organisations. **Design/methodology/approach:** By paying attention to gendered discourse in Korean *Chaebols*, this paper examines what is said and written about gender issues in glottographic statements (texts) and non-glottographic statements (charts and other visuals) of annual reports (ARs) published by five *Chaebols* since 2010. The paper uses a Foucauldian framework to develop the archive of statements made within these ARs.

Findings: Although there is an increase in female-employee ratios, ARs show that number of women at the board or senior management level continue to be small. ARs tend to provide numbers related to female employment and retention in their non-glottographic statements, yet these numbers occasionally differ from and frequently are not explained by glottographic statements. The strategies used by *Chaebols* to improve career prospects for their female staff are only vaguely described and rarely evaluated.

Originality/value: This paper looks beyond the existing discourse analysis on 'talk and text' by also investigating claims made through graphic and linear/pictorial elements and their interplay with text. This approach opens new understandings of how gendered discourses are constructed and how they (unintentionally) fail to resolve issues and perceptions related to female employment and career development in Korea.

Keywords Family-run conglomerates (*Chaebols*), gender, annual reports, female employment
Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The glass ceiling, coined by Loden in 1978, is a barrier found in organisational hierarchies which is just below the top management level (Loden, 1987; Weyer, 2007). This ceiling has been argued to constrain women from moving into senior management positions in business and is still a major issue worldwide (Weyer, 2007; Ambri, Tahir and Alias, 2019; Groeneveld, Bakker and Schmidt, 2020). To break the glass ceiling, determination, and commitment from top management are required to open more opportunities for women (Sahoo and Lenka, 2016; Manzi and Heilman, 2021).

Upper echelon theory suggests that a firm's outcomes can be predicted by their top managers' characteristics and gender is an important characteristic that influences top management decision-making (Moreno-Gomez, Lafuente and Vaillant, 2018). With different genders acting differently based on their values and interests, female directors play an enabling role to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion policies within firms (Bruna *et al.*, 2014). As such, having more women in top positions would lead to more policies that support gender equality. Current literature has been investigating how the presence and number of female directors positively affect a firm's disclosure and corporate social responsibility performance (Giron *et al.*, 2020; Peng *et al.*, 2021). However, limited studies evaluate a firm's disclosure when there is a lack of gender diversity in the upper echelons (Lee and Parpart, 2018).

Family businesses play a key part in understanding women's role in companies as it has been perceived that female family members are more likely to participate, either directly or indirectly, in the running of these companies (Vadnjaj and Zupan, 2009; Kim and Kim, 2018). Research on women's contributions to the family business is, however, still limited, attributed to their invisibility, creating a barrier to advancing their careers within family firms (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017). The "invisible" role of women in the family business is often linked to gender expectations in a family and society (Kim and Kim, 2018; Patrick *et al.*, 2016; Sharma, 2004). Welter (2020) highlights the importance of context to advance the discourse of gender and entrepreneurship. Normative and cultural institutions impact how gender is perceived in society, including the family business. How women are represented as business leaders within different cultures is strongly influenced by traditional stereotypes (Chrisman *et al.*, 2002; Hechavarria *et al.*, 2017; Rubio-Banon and Esteban-Lloret, 2016). Gendering contexts are also extremely varying across geographies, cultures, religions, and classes (Baker and Welter, 2017).

In Asia, the number of female business leaders is still much lower (15.1%) than in Northern Europe (37.6%), Western Europe (26.5%), US/Canada (28.6%), and at about the

2
3 same level as Central and Eastern Europe (19.3%), or sub-Saharan Africa (19.1 %), with
4 South Korea (hereafter Korea) reaching 4.2% women on boards (CWDI, 2020; Hoyt and
5 Simon, 2011). Among Asian countries, Korea, although considered a strongly "Westernised"
6 society and a developed country (Kim and Lee, 2014), currently has one of the largest economic
7 participation gender gaps (Cho and Lee, 2015; WEF, 2020), ranking 108th out of 153 countries
8 based on global standards of economic participation (0.55), education (0.97), health (0.98) and
9 political empowerment (0.18). These numbers indicate that the lack of female business and
10 political leaders are the most critical factor in lowering the country's global rankings (Cho *et*
11 *al.*, 2021). Yet surprisingly, current President Yoon has called for the abolition of the Gender
12 Equality Ministry, claiming it focuses too strongly on women's rights, stating that Korea has
13 "no structural gender discrimination," and describing gender inequality instead as a "personal
14 matter" (Kim and Lee, 2022; Yun, 2023).

15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24 Korea's economy is largely depending on family-run conglomerates (*Chaebols*) in
25 which family members take ownership roles across generations and the family controls the
26 strategic direction of the business (Kim and Kim, 2018). Little attention has been paid to
27 Chaebols' role in and responsibility for gender inequality in the workplace. Studies to date have
28 mostly stressed governmental regulation, intervention, and responsibility (Lee and Parpart,
29 2018; Kim, 1994; Sung, 2003; Won and Pascall, 2004). Chaebols have not only performed
30 macro-level economic development but also played a key role in creating microlevel inequality
31 in women's lives (Lee and Parpart, 2018). In Chaebols, male family members run the business,
32 while women support the family and are less involved in decision-making processes (Barnes,
33 1988; Dumas, 1989; Kim and Kim, 2018; Wang, 2010), eliciting strong gender segregation
34 (Hollander and Bukowitz, 1990). Female family members are accepted to participate in the
35 business succession process (Kim and Kim, 2018), but are considered unlikely as successors
36 for leading the business and are more likely used for continuing connections with people of
37 particular social status to reinforce business connections (Kim and Kim, 2018). While issues
38 of gender inequality have been identified in Korea (Lee and Parpart, 2018), it is important to
39 explain how a lack of gender diversity in the upper echelons of family-run conglomerates
40 influences the participation and contribution of the female workforce. Against this background,
41 there is a need to explore Korean perspectives on gender equality progress and to what extent
42 it is accounted for within the public communications of Chaebols.

43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
Based on annual reports (AR)s, this study explains how a lack of gender diversity in
upper echelons leads to limited advancement opportunities for female employees in Korea, by
revealing the contradictions of 'show and tell' found in these reports. It further discusses the

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

difference between glottographic (written texts) and non-glottographic (charts, diagrams, tables, and other visuals) forms and employs how glottographic and non-glottographic forms can be applied to articulating gender issues in ARs.

To achieve this, the paper examines five public-listed family-run Chaebols where there is a persistent gender gap phenomenon in the upper echelons by investigating: 1) how gender-related issues are communicated in ARs; and 2) to what extent statements about gender-related issues made within ARs convey the same messages.

The study offers several contributions. First, it undertakes a deep textual analysis of what the ARs say and do not say about gender issues across the range of their narrative and non-narrative statements. This approach opens new understandings of how gendered discourses are constructed and how they (unintentionally) fail to resolve issues and perceptions. Second, it extends the work of Lee and Parpart (2018) on the representation of Korean female employees in a corporate report by including both glottographic (written text) and non-glottographic (tables, charts, diagrams) statements, as there is a need to evaluate individual statements within the archive of available statements (Bassnett *et al.*, 2018). This allows work towards the development of a strategy to evaluate the representation of initiatives and their success in gender representation within ARs. Third, this paper expands the application of upper-echelon theory to evaluate the impact of gender gaps within the upper echelons of Korean conglomerates.

Literature review

Gender and family business

Research has used the upper echelon theory coined by Hambrick and Mason (1984) to explain how top management characteristics such as gender influences decision-making and organisational outcome. Extensive work has examined the impacts of having women in top-echelon positions on firms' value, sustainability, and performance (Banno *et al.*, 2023). Studies also found female managers are more ethical in their attitude and decision-making, thus enhancing shareholder values and performance outcomes (Gull *et al.*, 2021; You *et al.*, 2018). Having more diversity in the top management team also attracts more diverse talent and increases creativity within companies (Hillman *et al.*, 2007). Terjesen and Singh (2008) show that a higher representation of women on boards leads to increased numbers of women in senior management and a reduction of the gender pay gap. Similar findings were shown by Larrieta-Rubin de Celis *et al.* (2015), indicating that female directors positively influence practices related to gender equality. Garcia-Sanchez *et al.* (2022) reveal that higher levels of

gender equality support the decision to disclose all gender indicators required by the United Nations and Gender Reporting Initiatives. Further research highlights the impact of the senior corporate echelon on the company's gender equality representation in reporting. For example, in a study to analyse the gender policies disclosed in the presence of women on the Board of Directors (BOD), Furlotti *et al.* (2019) found a positive association between the presence of women in the role of chairperson and the implementation with disclosure of gender policies among Italian companies. Similarly, Garcia-Sanchez *et al.* (2019) confirmed female directors increase the probability of voluntary reporting on gender issues using a large international dataset.

The burgeoning evidence of how women in top positions contribute to business still needs to break the glass ceiling in some business contexts such as family business. Historically, female discrimination and devaluation have obstructed women as leaders and entrepreneurs in family-run businesses (Akhmedova *et al.*, 2020; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017). The upper echelon theoretical perspective has been used in family business research but mostly on family firm-specific characteristics such as the multi-generational involvement of family members, and appointment of family and non-family CEOs or directors. A handful of studies have considered the impact of gender diversity in family firms. For instance, Chadwick and Dawson (2018) found that female-led organisations (i.e., those with a female CEO and/or CFO) outperform male-led organisations in terms of nonfinancial performance across family and non-family businesses but not in financial performance. A review by Samara *et al.* (2019) suggests that women provide economic and non-economic advantages in family business boardrooms. Women are thought to contribute significantly to family performance and reputation (Peake *et al.*, 2017; Bauweraerts *et al.*, 2022) since women tend to show more loyalty to the business and sensitivity to the needs of family members and others (Curimbaba, 2002; Ng *et al.*, 2022). Regardless of their unique characteristics and abilities, there are still unbreakable 'glass ceilings' that hinder women to secure a position on the BOD or other leadership roles. In many instances, traditional gender roles have resulted in inequality in how women are valued in the business (Lee and Parpart, 2018). To reduce inequality, some countries in Europe have imposed gender quotas on public firms (UK GOV, 2022). Yet such considerations are still limited in family firms. As a result, women remain in the shadow of male family members controlling the business.

A recent work by Tao-Schuchardt and Kammerlander (2023) underscores the role of contexts and national culture in influencing gender diversity and financial performance in family firms. Most studies on gender and family firms relied on published financial and non-

2
3 financial figures to examine the gender impact on a firm's outcomes. Few have looked at the
4 underlying gender issues in family firms using text and pictures to discover the unspoken truth.
5 Considering the limited progress on gender diversity and a lack of studies that examine the
6 detrimental impact of not having many women in the top echelons of family firms, it is crucial
7 to investigate how these public-listed firms voluntarily communicate gender issues and how
8 gender narratives are presented in their ARs. As family firms are context-dependent and
9 heterogeneous in nature, and gender in family firms research is mainly researched in Europe
10 and America, more investigations should be conducted in underexplored contexts to advance
11 the current discourse on gender and family business.
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19

20 *Gender narratives and glottographic systems*

21 ARs (including financial and corporate sustainability reports) have a key role in promoting
22 gender equality. They are the main communication channel for listed companies to
23 shareholders and the community (Stanton and Stanton, 2002). They use written text, graphs,
24 charts, diagrams, and images to communicate a company's priorities, for example regarding
25 efforts made to promote equality. Bassyouny *et al.* (2020) noted the gender effects of narrative
26 disclosure tones on financial reporting. Lee and Parpart (2018) noticed contradictions in the
27 written text within ARs of Korean conglomerates on the representation of women, showing
28 that while it appeared more attention was being given to improving female employment and
29 career development, the format in which the narrative is provided indicates a need for women
30 to "masculinise" to achieve career improvements. Furthermore, they suggested that what was
31 not being said about gender issues in these ARs (Parpart, 2013) can be considered a form of
32 resistance against gender equality (Lee and Parpart, 2018). Their study focussed only on
33 glottographic statements, however, limiting the evaluation and interpretation of ARs solely to
34 their written text. Using a similar approach, Hossain *et al.* (2021) showed that Bangladeshi
35 companies provide limited information on gender issues and use narratives on female
36 employment as a form of impression management, without showing much objective
37 improvements in female career development.
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 Other studies have focused on female representation in pictographic content within ARs
53 from various perspectives. For instance, Bernardi, Bean and Weippert (2005) indicated that
54 companies with more gender-diverse boards are more likely to include pictures of board
55 members in ARs to communicate this diversity to their shareholders. Kuasirikun (2011), using
56 Habemas' theory of communicative action, showed that within ARs of Thai companies,
57
58
59
60

women are generally depicted as subordinates to male counterparts, irrespective of their contribution to economic success. Staffansson Pauli (2016) demonstrated women are often depicted as young or in "token positions" by Swedish ARs of public housing and real estate companies, while men are depicted as employees. More recently, Sheerin and Garavan (2022) showed that while some top-performing women within investment banking are being recognised, the general representation of women within this industry by media remains to be stereotypical, namely that the lack of female leaders lies within their supposed internal weaknesses. Similarly, companies have been found to represent women more often than men in subordinative roles on recruitment websites, even though they are included in about 50% of all website images (Bujaki *et al.*, 2020).

One representation of (gender) narratives often overlooked in the interpretation of ARs is non-glottographic statements including graphs and charts (Bassnett, Frandsen & Hoskin, 2018). While expected to be a representation of the (glottographic) text in summative visuals, previous studies have found that often conflicts arise in what is written in texts and how this information is represented in non-glottographic statements or how non-glottographic statements could be interpreted by the reader (Charnock and Hoskin, 2020; Bebbington and Unerman, 2020). Investigating non-glottographic statements could shed light on the extent to which glottographic discourse on female employment and career development is part of impression management and distinguish between these narratives from true aspects of breaking the glass ceiling. Current literature on gender and family business rarely utilised the approach to illustrate possible contradictions of "show vs tell" in ARs.

Research context

Korea is a country with a population of about 50 million, with half of them living within the Greater Seoul area (Choi, 2022). About 49.9% of the population are women, with this percentage expected to increase by 2030 (Korea Herald, 2021). Korean women entrance in the labour market has been a modern phenomenon. In 1980, Korean female labour participation rate was less than 40%. In 2015, this had increased to 65%. Simultaneously, male labour participation rate decreased from 95% to 85% (Kim, 2017). Both female and male entrance into colleges increased since the 1960s and peaked around 2008, but 2008 also induced a transition with more Korean women now entering college compared to men (Kim, 2017).

From a political perspective, Korea appears to vary strongly, with progressive governments succeeding conservative governments and vice versa (Koga, 2023).

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Currently, the government under President Yoon is conservative, with a focus towards improving relations with USA and Japan, stronger aggression towards North Korea, and maintaining traditional Korean socio-cultural aspects (Kim and Lee, 2022; Yun, 2023; Koga, 2023). In 2014, Korean government installed the Gender Equality Act, providing a legal framework to increase women labour participation, especially towards managerial roles and company board membership. This has led to only moderate improvements in gender equality (Kim *et al.*, 2023). Simultaneously, although Korea is one of the wealthier East-Asian countries, it suffers from evidenced workplace gender discrimination issues, leading to higher risk of depression with female employees (Kim *et al.*, 2022).

These issues could be explained partly by Korea's traditionally highly gendered social norm. Gender hierarchy has been constructed based on archaic concepts of femininity and masculinity tied to the ideology of housewife and husband-provider and the gender division of labour (Moon, 2005). Under these socioeconomic circumstances, women are expected to conform to the role of being docile, supportive, and subordinate subjects (Kim, 2001; Kim and Park, 2003; Kwon, 2019). Two cultural backgrounds, Confucianism and military culture, play a central role in the construction of this society (Cho *et al.*, 2016; Cho *et al.*, 2021). Confucianism suggests male supremacy in which women obey and support men (fathers, husbands, and sons) in their life. Women are discouraged to have a working career and encouraged to take responsibility for family chores such as housekeeping, childcare, and cooking (Park and Cho 1995; Kim 2015). Gender-divided family roles unconsciously transfer to a gender divide in the workplace, which leads women to take on insignificant or low-level positions (Shin, 2015; Cho *et al.*, 2016; Song and Lee, 2019). Female educational advancement increased economic labour activities and economic participation has gradually improved their status, but gender inequality remains (Raymo *et al.*, 2015).

Alongside this, Korea's rapid economic success was escalated by military-centred industrialisation between the 1960s and 1990s, and a military order-and-command culture increases a sense of loyalty, working towards targets, and reaching success (Hemmert, 2012). The colonial roots of how this military-centred industrialisation has affected the perception of masculinity within South Korean society have been explored elsewhere (Kim & Choi, 1998; Miyoshi-Jager, 2003; Lee, 2019; Cheng, 2021). Generally, as military service is mandatory for almost all Korean men, its impact on society has been instrumental in sustaining Korea's male-dominant system and culture (Cho *et al.*, 2021).

Previous studies have highlighted potential aspects of Korean culture that affect the position of women within industry and the working environment. Hemmert (2012)

2
3 identified the expectation from Koreans to show loyalty to their employer and a willingness to
4 almost sacrifice their private life and desires for the benefit of the company. In most cases, for
5 women, this idea appears to force them to accept a lower position in society, as they may be
6 unsuitable to dedicate sufficient time to both their job and family (Davis and Williamson,
7 2019; Woodhams, *et al.*, 2015), or to give up on a family life and work in a highly masculinist
8 environment (Roberson and Suzuki, 2005; Lee and Parpart, 2018).
9

10 Under the Korean government's programmes, Chaebols played a major role in Korea's
11 economic revolution towards a current-day industrial giant (Amsden, 1992; Lee and Parpart,
12 2018). During the Confucian-based governance in the 1960s and 1970s, the Korean
13 developmental state used a hierarchical and gendered metaphor of familial relationships in
14 regulating state-society relations (Han and Ling, 1998; Kwon, 2019): the state as the father,
15 corporations as its sons, and the society as the mother in a supporting role, with its members
16 acting as cheap labourers. Chaebols considered "first sons" (*changnam*) received the most
17 benefits (Kim, 2001; Kwon, 2019). Consequently, the contemporary Korean economy relies
18 heavily on Chaebols, which still follow these traditional hierarchies.
19

20 From a general employment perspective, Korean women, after marriage and
21 motherhood, are more likely to be employed in part-time or low-level jobs or not return to
22 employment at all (Song and Lee, 2019). This lack of women in managerial roles may be a
23 contributing factor to the findings by Lee and Parpart (2018), who showed that the discourse
24 in multinational companies' ARs is strongly oriented towards masculinity and a male-
25 dominated society.
26

27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 **Methodology**

42 To evaluate the position of women within Chaebols based on discourse on female employees
43 and business leaders, ARs from five Chaebols published were selected. Companies were
44 selected based on a purposeful sampling approach (Flick, 2018), which involved a selection of
45 companies based on their industry classification, market share, and gender distribution over
46 their boards and the entire workforce. The sample was selected from a list of Chaebol
47 conglomerates based on their revenue and assets in 2021 while maintaining a representation of
48 the main industries within South Korea (electronics, transportation, and retail). These
49 companies have been traditional family conglomerates and protected by the government. Table
50 1 provides an overview of the selected conglomerates.
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Insert Table I about here

2
3
4
5 Data were collected from ARs published over the 2010-2022 period to determine if any
6 change in behaviour or representation of gender issues within conglomerate ARs could be
7 observed, especially due to the recently heightened international attention towards gender
8 equality, making it more likely to observe a change in behaviour of conglomerates and
9 narratives within their AR on gender-related issues (Cavern-Rubio et al., 2019). For example,
10 the #MeToo movement benefited Korean society through increased awareness, support for
11 victims of sexual violence, and the fostering of organisational change to fight against gender
12 discrimination (Shin, 2021).
13
14
15
16
17
18

19 Glottographic statement analysis followed a similar approach as described in Lee and
20 Parpart (2018), involving a discourse analysis of both text and silences (i.e., things that are not
21 said) about gender issues, especially regarding gender equality targets, initiatives, and success
22 of these initiatives. Non-glottographic statement interpretation involved the interpretation of
23 their layout, including (sub-)statements. The interplay between glottographic and non-
24 glottographic statements was then evaluated using a Foucauldian framework (Arribas-Ayllon
25 and Walkerdine, 2017; Foucault, 2019). Glottographic and non-glottographic statements
26 related to gender issues were identified within ARs by searching for keywords (gender,
27 woman/women, female, mother, and diversity) using the NVivo 12 environment. From these,
28 a corpus of statements was constructed by extracting graphs and text sections that:
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

- 36 1. Describe a gender issue (e.g., mother not returning to employment after childbirth);
- 37 2. Suggest an action to resolve a gender-related issue (e.g., offering paternal leave to divide
38 childcare duties); or
- 39 3. Evaluate the result of an action (e.g., more mothers returning to work, more fathers taking
40 paternal leave).
41
42
43
44

45 The location of these excerpts was used to evaluate the relationship and interplay with other
46 gender-related statements. This evaluation led to the identification of four main themes:
47 supporting female employment, talent development, employee retention, and leadership. An
48 archive of statements within each theme was then constructed (Foucault, 1972). Archiving of
49 these statements provides a means to identify misrepresentations of data through the interplay
50 of statements within and between reports (Foucault, 2019). This allows investigating how the
51 non-glottographic statement is constructed and reads as a simulacrum (i.e., sign, image,
52 model; Bassnett, et al., 2018). It also creates a new idea about how gender-related issues are
53 articulated based on two different forms of
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

2
3 *linguaging* and how a Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis can be usefully applied in
4 articulating gender inequality in ARs (Foucault, 1972). The analysis can identify differences
5 in what is represented with and within different statement forms, to what extent the
6 information within different statement forms agrees, and which matters are communicated or
7 are silenced/missed within AR texts. This allows work towards the development of a strategy
8 to evaluate the representation of initiatives and their success in gender representation within
9 ARs.

10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Following this, potential contradictions between statements within themes were identified. Each statement form's contents were first evaluated as fundamentally different from the remainder of the AR, after which the interplay between statements was reconstructed and evaluated. As such, the aim was to analyse how gender equality efforts are accounted for in different statement forms, how these forms interplay with one another, and how they are used and interpreted within the communication on female employment in Chaebol ARs. The analysis also aimed to explain how all statement forms are deployed and to what extent they reinforce messages on gender equality within Chaebols, thereby shaping the discourse on gender inequalities. Finally, using upper-echelon theory from a gender and family business perspective, the impacts of the gender gap within the upper echelons of the largest form of business in Korea was evaluated from these statements. Investigating all the statements and their interplays adds to high-stake contradictions shaping definitions and assumptions about senior female executives in family firms.

Findings

Based on Table 1, all Chaebols have 9 - 18% women on their BOD. This shows a low female representation in the upper echelons. Overall, discussions about gender-related issues are increasing in frequency when comparing ARs from the 2020s with 2010s. In general, four main themes were found about gender-related issues communicated in ARs.

Employment ratios - Numbers without evaluations

All Chaebols provide glottographic and non-glottographic statements about the number of female employee ratios, some showing initiatives to improve their female employment ratio. For instance, Samsung, with 18% of females on the BOD, provides a glottographic statement claiming that their Korean workforce exists for 27% of women, and women accounted for 49% of their global workforce in their 2015 AR (p. 42-43). The text mentions actions Samsung has taken to improve inclusivity were flexible working schedules for employees with children and

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

setting up support for a healthier work-life balance. This is followed by a non-glottographic statement consisting of two tables, showing the ratio of female employees (Figure 1). The table on the left shows the percentage of female employees based on job function. It shows data for three years (2012-2014), and the percentages are illustrated with a cartoon of a woman underneath the percentage for each year. It shows that the female employment percentage has increased from 39 to 42%. The table shows female employees split between 3 job types (Sales, Manufacturing and Product Development) but it does not show the ranks or positions held by women. The manufacturing percentage increased by 1% yearly, whereas sales and product development show stable levels. The table on the right shows the percentage of female employees over the same three-year period for various regions in the world. Apart from an increase in female employees in Southeast Asia/Southwest Asia/Japan and Africa, and relatively stable numbers in Europe, female employee rates appear to be decreasing.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Looking at the interplay between statements, the glottographic statements mention a 49% female employee ratio, yet this number is not observed in the non-glottographic statement. The closest is the percentage of staff (48.3%). It is therefore unclear what calculation was made to achieve this 49%, apart from a potential error in numerical rounding. Furthermore, although the text mentions improvements in gender ratios, in most regions, the percentage of female employees appears to be reducing. This trend appears to be confirmed by a similar glottographic statement provided by Samsung in their 2019 AR, where the percentage of female employees dropped to 40.2% (Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 about here

The female-employee ratio looks similar in LG which has 14% female on the BOD. LG's 2010 AR covers female employment within the company using a glottographic statement titled "Social Data" (Figure 3), followed by a non-glottographic statement consisting of three bar charts covering temporary, retired, and female employee percentages over the period 2008-2010. It appears the female employee percentage has decreased from 15.7% to 13.2%.

Insert Figure 3 about here

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The glottographic statement describes the number of employees at LG and the ratio of Korean workers. It then summarises the average age of employees and executives. It claims that female executives on average are younger than men but only account for a small percentage of executives (1.5%).

Talent development and management- Is there room for female employees?

In Figure 4, the 'Employee Demographic' section provides headcounts of all employees, excluding executive directors, thus showing limited attention to improving gender diversity in upper echelons. This population is divided into 'Employment Type' and 'Job Position/Level'. 'Employment type' refers to full-time and temporary (but not part-time) contracted employees. 'Job Position/Level' refers to managers and non-managers. As only data for one year are provided, comparison with other years is not possible. There are very few temporary employees. No reason behind this low number of temporary staff is provided.

Insert Figure 4 about here

In another instance, CJ describes its "People First" policy using a glottographic statement (Figure 5) in its 2015 sustainability report (p. 58). It describes the commitment to growing and developing employees to improve the company's performance. The core ideas behind the strategy are shown in a non-glottographic visual providing the three pillars of the strategy (integrity, passion, and creativity). Next to these statements, a non-glottographic statement about new recruitment is provided. The table divides new recruitments into "New recruits in Korea", "Male", "Female", "New recruits overseas" and "Total". It further shows the evolution of recruits over the period 2013-2015.

Insert Figure 5 about here

On the other hand, CJ's 2020 sustainability report mentions, in a glottographic statement, that the proportion of female managers has increased by 1% from 2019 to 2020 (Figure 6) This is followed by a non-glottographic statement dividing female employees into ratios of (total) staff, female executive ratio, female managers and junior managers, employees in revenue-generating departments and female ratios in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)-related positions. All ratios are provided in percentages for the period

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

2017-2020, alongside a target for 2021 and appear to be increasing. A second glottographic statement titled "Reinforcement of female leadership" claims that CJ is actively attempting to increase women's career prospects through leadership reinforcement programmes. It also claims the appointment of a female board member and commitment to a non-discriminating and open culture. The following grey box indicates that CJ joined the Target Gender Equality programme in Korea to set activities for increasing female executives and HR diversity. The glottographic statement describes the type of workers hired by CJ and the 2% increase in female staff members. The non-glottographic statement contains a table of headcounts, separating employees into total, regular and short-term/temporary staff, with each section further divided into male, female and total. Data are provided for the period 2018-2020. Male staff appears relatively stable, with female staff members increasing yearly by about 200 employees. Both statements appear to only list numbers.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Female employee retention -Inclusive environment through maternity cover?

Female employee retention after motherhood has received much attention from the Korean government, and Chaebols often focus on communicating their (high) employee return rates after parental leave in ARs (Ma, 2014). In their 2015 AR, Samsung provides a glottographic statement about its actions taken to improve inclusiveness are flexible working schedules for employees with children and setting up support for a healthier work-life balance (Figure 7). They particularly pay attention to increasing the number of female team leaders and executives, but there is no evidence of figures and numbers to validate their efforts.

Insert Figure 7 about here

The AR further provides a non-glottographic statement about working mothers (Figure 8). The table shows the support provided to working mothers in Korea, giving the number of employees on maternity leave as a cartoon baby bottle, with the headcount written above the cartoon. The table underneath shows the percentage of mothers returning to work after maternity leave, the number of children Samsung childcare centres can capacitate, and the number of childcare centres.

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Insert Figure 8 about here

In a different example (Figure 9), Korean Air's 2010 AR provides a glottographic statement titled "Expanding female workforce". It mentions that Korean Air has continuously increased its female employees and now achieves 34%. It further explains initiatives taken to retain female employment, which is mostly themed around providing maternity leave and support in case women wish to start a family but suffer from infertility. Again, there is no breakdown of the level of positions held by women.

Insert Figure 9 about here

Hyundai, with 15% of females in its BOD, identifies the number of employees on parental leave and returning after parental leave (Figure 10). It divides each item into a male and female section and shows data for the years 2012 to 2014. Over this period, the number of female employees on maternity leave has increased, with the number of male employees remaining stable. Retention rates for women have climbed from 94% to 97%, whereas male retention after parental leave decreased from 100% to 95%. The accompanying glottographic statement does not provide further information about the causes of these changes, only mentioning that the number of employees on parental leave is increasing thanks to policies allowing employees to return to work after parental leave.

Insert Figure 10 about here

Female leadership: An "either ... or" rather than "and" environment?

In their 2021 AR (p. 11) Korean Air mention being part of SkyTeam and voluntarily signing up to the IATA's (International Air Transport Association) gender diversification. Further information about female employees is provided in a separate statement (Figure 11). Apart from counts, it also shows percentages identifying total employees, managers and employees hired abroad. The bar charts present the number of men and women for each of the three graphs. It shows an increase in female managers from 35.4% in 2019 to 39.9% in 2021 but women hired from abroad have reduced from 58% to 52%.

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Insert Figure 11 about here

The only accompanying narrative statement states that the percentage of female employees has remained at 45% over the past three years, which the authors claim is an "important indicator of diversity". It further states the company provides the highest level of wages and welfare benefits regardless of gender among airline companies in Korea. Looking at the interplay, there is a minor conflict in the glottographically claimed percentage of female employees, and the actual counting as seen in the non-narrative statement over the three years. Such discrepancies do not provide the reader with confidence.

In Figure 12, Samsung divides its 2015 female employees into staff, managers, and executives. All percentages appear to be increasing over the 3 years shown, but ratios of female managers and staff are low.

Insert Figure 12 about here

This is followed by a glottographic statement interviewing two female employees in a leadership position (Figure 13). The first woman is referred to as a "Master", whereas the second woman is referred to as "Ms" ("Miss") and acts as a vice-president of the software development team. Both interviews provide a short biography about the women's careers, alongside their philosophy in executing their employment.

Insert Figure 13 about here

Discussion

The results show that Chaebols appear to show more gender awareness by reporting more about female employment, gender policies and career development in their recent compared to earlier ARs. However, descriptions related to improved female employment and board member numbers, how these improvements were achieved and the type of actions that are being taken (or will be taken in the future), remain vague and inconsistent. Glottographic statements make strong claims about female employment and actions taken to improve female employee numbers and the ability of women to develop their careers. However, these actions are only vaguely explained, and ARs do not provide an evolutionary analysis of initiatives and their effects. The findings show the flaws in voluntary reporting on gender issues when there is limited female involvement in the upper echelons,

2
3 thus advancing prior works (Garcia-Sanchez *et al.*, 2019; 2022; Furlotti *et al.*, 2019). On the
4 other hand, non-glottographic statements often provide numbers without providing details
5 about how these were derived. In their interpl_ay with glottographic statements, inconsistencies
6 often occur, leading to different messages being presented. The lack of information makes it
7 difficult for the reader to understand what may cause discrepancies between statements. It
8 further leads to confusion about which statement provides an accurate summary of reality,
9 which can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretation of claimed actions taken to improve
10 and results related to gender equalisation. To rephrase the argument of Macve (2015): Is the
11 (glottographic) truth being told or are the (non-glottographic) numbers being calculated
12 correctly? These issues arise in all four themes identified in this study.
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

22 ***Employment ratios***

24 With recent claims by the Korean government and others about the gender gap in Korea
25 being closed (Kim and Lee, 2022; Yun, 2023), there appears to be a misunderstanding about
26 the current situation for female employees in Korea. The findings illustrate contrasting
27 evidence. Female involvement in Chaebol, both at senior management and employee level,
28 remains at a low level, even though global initiatives were adopted into Korean society to
29 improve the involvement of women in employment. One explanation for this divergence in
30 opinion can be found in how the situation for women in the working place is described by
31 companies, especially in their public-facing publications such as ARs. There is still a dominant
32 influence of cultural societal expectations on female gender roles (Lee & Parpart, 2018). The
33 Chaebols have used these gendered images and ideologies of femininity and masculinity to
34 construct "desirable" workers and encourage gendered job segregation in Chaebols, as found
35 by Kim and Park (2003). The examples above show women being employed in lower-level,
36 manufacturing jobs, alongside conflicting messages about gender ratios, with
37 glottographic statements describing improvements in female employee ratios, but non-
38 glottographic statements showing the opposite (Figures 1-2). Considering these data and
39 Foucault's (2019) idea that statements should not be analysed as a single point in time but as an
40 evolution from previous statements, one may wonder what has happened with initiatives
41 proposed by Chaebol to make it easier for women to remain in employment and develop
42 their career in earlier ARs. When disclaiming gender gaps (Figure 3), statements often
43 make bold statements about gaps being closed, without providing information about
44 how numbers were obtained (e.g., measuring the adjusted or non-adjusted pay gap) if
45 the numbers are good/bad, or what may cause the change in
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

2
3
4 numbers. In other words, statements within and between AR appear to state parallel
5 information, without much overlap or referrals to previous ARs, leaving the reader with much
6 work to do regarding data interpretation.
7

8 The evaluation of the female employment ratio in these selected chaebols shows
9 that when there is a lack of gender diversity in the upper echelon, the firm's disclosure of
10 gender statements brings limited meaning. An aggregated female employee ratio does not help
11 to showcase gender diversity at all levels of organisational hierarchy which again creates a
12 barrier for women to advance in family businesses.
13
14
15
16
17

18 *Talent management and recruitment*

19 There is a rising social influence of Korean women who contributed to around half of the
20 current workforce. While more women are involved in economic activities, their needs and
21 potential are still greatly missed and underrepresented in Chaebols' talent management
22 strategies. As a result, many Korean women are more likely to be paid less at work and
23 disregarded for promotion.
24
25
26
27
28

29 Chaebols communicate efforts they developed or will develop to improve talent
30 development. Yet, a major concern is that this talent development mostly highlights full-time
31 staff. Previous reports have identified that part-time employment is rising in Korea, partially
32 due to governmental policies attempting to improve work-life balance (Song and Lee, 2019).
33 With the strong emphasis on masculinity in (full-time) employment (Lee and Parpart, 2018;
34 Roberson and Suzuki, 2005), part-time employees are more likely to be (married) women
35 (Song and Lee, 2019). Part-timers generally have lower opportunities for career development
36 and lower salaries per labour hour compared to full-timers (Shin, 2015). The United Nation
37 reports emphasise the need for equal opportunities between employees, yet Chaebols
38 generally appear not to address issues related to part-time workers or how flexible
39 working is made possible in their ARs: there is hardly any mention of part-time
40 employees and facilities provided for them. The interplay between statements found in the
41 sustainability section of the Korean Air 2021 annual report (p.57 and Figure 4) shows an
42 example of the vagueness in which gender-related issues around career development and
43 part-time work are described, and how contradictions between statements occur.
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54

55 Similarly, reporting on talent management and employee improvements are
56 rather vague. In Figure 5, connection between the glottographic and non-glottographic
57 statements is rather limited. The glottographic statement does not provide information
58
59
60

2
3 about recruitment strategies, nor an explanation of the recruitment numbers and how
4 gender diversity is considered in higher positions. Interestingly, whereas the recruits
5 inside Korea are divided into binary genders, overseas recruits are not. No reason is given for
6 this discrepancy. More recent ARs (Figure 6) show some improvement in their
7 structure. Although a full evaluation of how increased female employee ratios were
8 achieved is not mentioned, the interplay between non-glottographic and glottographic
9 statements has been made clear by detailing how targets were set, alongside a description of
10 efforts ("leadership programme") that have been set in place to improve women's
11 careers. Yet still, only numbers without much information about how these numbers were
12 achieved are provided in the "Human Resources" section. Part-time employment and
13 flexible work arrangement are again not identified.

24 *Female employee retention*

25
26
27 In Confucian Korea, the identity of the female employee continues to conflict with the
28 traditional role of women as mothers, wives, and/or daughters (Won, 2016). Previous
29 Korean governments have advocated that a statutory entitlement of leave arrangements in the
30 form of parental leave enables mothers to maintain their dual identity as workers and as
31 mothers without chronic career interruption (Block et al., 2013; Song et al., 2010; Sung, 2014;
32 Won, 2016), yet Chaebols do not seem to discontinue traditional gender role stereotypes
33 (Cha and Won, 2014; Won, 2016). The format in which statements on parental leave
34 are provided in ARs is vague and unsatisfactory while the format and interplay between
35 glottographic statements can show contradictory claims. Statements on parental leave
36 induce a stereotype of femininity, they also show silences in the other direction, where
37 women in senior positions are implicitly stereotyped as "marginally feminine" (Lee and
38 Parpart, 2018). As many mothers are only able to achieve part-time employment, which does
39 not benefit significantly family finances due to low wages (Song and Lee, 2019), they decide
40 to not re-enter employment.

41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48 Previous research has discussed how the Korean government have expanded childcare
49 services and parental leave benefits while at the same time attempting to minimise the
50 discontinuity within a mother's career (Ma, 2014). Most Chaebols reported their maternity
51 and paternity return rates as part of their retention ratio. They have also started
52 running programs for maintaining a healthy work-life balance, such as parental leave
53 and leave for fertility treatment and the development and expansion of company-
54 funded childcare centres. The timing of return after parental leave is mostly
55 determined by policies and regulations related to

2
3 the length over which the companies financially support employees during parental leave.
4 Korean women will consider these benefits before making decisions about whether they return
5 to work after parental leave. Generally, women who are eligible for leave benefits are usually
6 those who hold stable and secure employment positions (Ma, 2014). Although women
7 returning to work after childbirth may have increased and Chaebols appear to promote the
8 option of taking paternal leave to their (female) employees, the analysis shows that none of the
9 statements appears to describe how this is improving female employment or career
10 development (compared to when no paternal leave was provided). Similar to previous work
11 (Lee and Parpart, 2018), the stark contrast in low uptake of paternal leave compared to
12 maternal leave is obvious, questioning the extent to which this communication helps
13 resolve the traditional perception of female employment. Furthermore, it is observed that the
14 ARs rarely provide information on what support is provided to allow parents to return to
15 employment, and if they return to the same role they exercised before parenthood.
16 These findings suggest that Chaebols are mostly focused on ticking the box when it comes to
17 having women return to work after childbirth, rather than intentionally seeking strategies to
18 help women develop their careers alongside being mothers. This is especially clear in the way
19 senior female employees are referred to as "Master" or "Ms" with a focus on their current
20 position and not their career development in the statements of Figure 13. These claims show
21 an emptiness between the steps of "allowing" mothers to return to work (as stated in most
22 glottographic statements), having high success in returning mothers (as stated in most non-
23 glottographic statements) and allowing mothers to continue their career development
24 (not stated).

41 42 43 *Female leadership*

44 The final concern relates to the silence regarding women in senior management positions.
45 Though there are goals and targets towards improving female senior management mentioned
46 in ARs, hardly any strategies are described that may help female employees achieve senior
47 management status. There is also a lack of attention given to female members of the family
48 running the Chaebol, or any female BOD members. It is also noted that when women in
49 managerial positions are mentioned, they are all parked under a general umbrella of managers,
50 without including a separation between junior, senior and executive managers. For instance,
51 Korean Air's 2021 AR statements (Figure 11) claim that 2,047 women (in a population of
52 5,126) are in managerial positions while having a low percentage (9%) of women on the
53 BOD. With just one large category of "manager", it is not possible to determine the
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

2
3 seniority of these women. With such all-in-one categories, one may question what levels of
4 management are available at Korean Air and whether this un-nuanced category hides low
5 levels of female senior managers. There is also no reference to the IATA's
6 commitment to increasing female senior management positions to 25% by 2025, leaving
7 readers with questions about how Korean Air will be able to achieve this benchmark, or its
8 position towards it. The claim that 39.9% of managers in 2021 are women is surprising
9 considering the generally low levels of female managers in top Korean businesses. It may be
10 correct, but in this context, it is not relevant as there is no explanation about how the
11 numbers were derived. Further information provided is very minimalistic, lacking
12 detailed information about the roles women play within the company. It can be argued that
13 both statements provide a coherent message in terms of their silence: they are not saying
14 anything about female senior managers. Silence can be perceived as the source of resistance
15 to gender equality from dominant groups in societies (Parpart, 2013; Lee and Parpart, 2018).
16 The non-narrative statement form has done so through its single category of managers.
17 Mentioning the work towards IATA targets would have made the statements more
18 relevant for evaluating gender-related issues.

19
20 Similarly, Samsung claims it is making improvements for mothering women to
21 return to work and continue their careers, yet the women selected for an interview either
22 appear unmarried ("Ms"), or their marital position is unclear ("Master"). Both women appear
23 to be in their forties, which potentially triggers the hidden message that women with family
24 care duties cannot achieve managerial-level employment. As such, it might unintentionally
25 enforce the perception that the reason for a low number of female managers is due to
26 only non-married women being able to climb the career ladder, endorsing the need for
27 women to approach their career development from a masculine perspective.

28 *Chaebol's missed opportunities*

29 The interactions between family members and the gender dynamics within the Korean Chaebol
30 families play an important role in systemising how Chaebols (and other Korean companies)
31 operate and advance over time. This study offers support to the suggestion of Nulleshi and
32 Kalonaityte (2022) that gender dynamics in family-run businesses often construct gendered
33 hierarchies. Women employed in the Chaebols are unlikely to succeed towards CEO positions
34 and are likely to be (very) distant from the main roles, limiting the number of potential success
35 stories about a woman's and mother's career development (Ma, 2014). Although they do

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

strongly support male family members in taking up their roles within the business, even these "traditional" contributions remain invisible in the ARs. The lack of consideration for talent management among part-time workers and flexible working arrangements observed in the ARs highlight Chaebol's emphasis on male-dominated, self-sacrificial, hierarchical work environments. Hence, women appear to be devalued as leaders in family-run conglomerates in Korea, as highlighted in prior studies (Akhmedova *et al.*, 2020; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017).

The themes that emerged when evaluating gender narratives published in ARs of the five chaebols reveal contradictions in the show and tell. Where glottographic narratives sometimes claim big leaps in the progression of female leadership and employment, accompanying non-glottographic statements do not show strong improvements. In other instances, non-glottographic statements provide vague information that is difficult to interpret and accompanying glottographic narratives do not explain the available charts and graphs. Taking a historical perspective on statements, the information in non-glottographic statements often varies significantly between years, making it difficult to obtain an evolutionary perspective on the progression towards gender equality.

The inconsistent messages on gender statements highlight limited efforts found in the male-dominated managed Chaebols to address the gender gap phenomenon. The findings also illustrate that when there is a lack of gender diversity at the top management level, firms have less inclination to consider gendered perspectives in business policies to support female progression in firms. As a result, there are fewer initiatives to recruit women into the business, provide childcare support and offer flexible work arrangements that promote diversity and inclusivity in the workplace.

In summary, through their inconsistency and vagueness in reporting gender-related issues, combined with disallowing female family members to take on CEO or other high senior management roles, Chaebols have missed the opportunity to become drivers of gender equality within Korean industry and work environment. It is crucial for these long-standing family businesses to have better and clearer communication about their efforts towards gender-related issues and showing understanding of gender-related issues. This would encourage other business forms to follow, and Chaebols could lead to upheld gender equality in Korean society.

Conclusion and contributions

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

The paper investigates gender narratives in Korea's large family businesses. It provides new insights for evaluating the extent to which publicly available reports from Chaebols fail to avoid or reverse unintended gender gaps, although they may have the best intentions to resolve this issue and attempt to communicate these intentions with their glottographic and non-glottographic statements.

Chaebols, in their ARs, are increasingly paying attention to identifying and addressing gender gaps in terms of female employee ratio, talent development, retention, and senior management involvement in reports and communications. Yet such gaps continue to prove difficult to close in practice, especially since there is a lack of gender diversity in the upper echelons. The gender-related messages are inconsistent when comparing the glottographic statements (texts) and non-glottographic statements (charts and other visuals) from ARs in the selected Chaebols. The improvement in gender ratios and policies fails to show the impact on improving female employees' progress to the upper echelons. While gender-aware policies are being communicated, women in senior positions are profiled to fit the underlying masculinist culture.

From the theoretical perspective, results from the study extend the application of upper-echelon theory by scrutinising how a lack of gender diversity in the upper echelons impacts gender narratives in public disclosures in an underexplored context. Advancing the work of Tao-Schuchardt and Kammerlander (2023) which only focus on financial outcomes of gender diversity in family firms, the study corroborates the shortcomings of family firms in communicating the truth about gender-related issues. The study progresses beyond the organisational benefits of gender diversity in upper echelons. It shows the drawbacks of not pursuing it and how it affects the gender narratives in Chaebols' ARs when women are not given power and voices at the top management level. Regardless of the initiatives to support female employment and advancement, the selected Chaebols show contradictions in their claims and fail to address the need to close the gender gap, especially within the upper echelons. While the Korean government and global organisations representing specific industries have recommended increasing the number of women in leadership roles within Korean companies (Ma, 2014; IATA, 2023), Korean Chaebols seem nowhere closer to reducing the gender gap or indicating such intentions. This may affect their global competitiveness due to undervaluing women's contributions (Gull *et al.*, 2021; Campopiano *et al.*, 2017).

Much research has focused on evaluating gender narratives through either analysis of glottographic (Lee and Parpart, 2018; Hossain *et al.* 2021) or pictographic (Bernardi, Bean and Weippert, 2005; Kuasirikun, 2011; Staffansson Pauli, 2026; Sheering and Garavan, 2022)

2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
statements. Recent work has suggested the inclusion of non-glottographic statements in the analysis of accounting and accountability (Bassnett et al., 2018; Charnock and Hoskin, 2020; Bebbington and Unerman, 2020) to ensure a full identification and interpretation of contradictions within annual reports can be achieved. This study provides an initial consideration of these non-glottographic statements, building them into the archive (Foucault, 1972) of statements for evaluating the evolution of gender representation within Chaebol ARs. Thus, this novel approach enriches current discourse on gender narratives by revealing the 'show and tell' effect.

17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
As Chaebols employ most of the workforce in Korea, they would be able to contribute to the change of practice and societal expectations if they acknowledge their current shortcomings and strive to make progressive changes. They could take an active role to ensure that the career of female family members and female senior managers and board members within the company are prioritised by crafting purposely policies to improve gender diversity. Based on these findings, public-listed firms like Chaebols are recommended to develop (national or global) standards regarding the communication of statements about gender equalisation. These recommendations should involve accurate descriptions of what type of information regarding gender, female employees and their roles should be provided. A better representation of the initiatives towards mothers' (and generally female) career development is recommended, alongside the results of these initiatives. One option could be the provision of exemplary career timelines for career development when the initiatives set up to improve career development are offered to employees, and what previous qualifications employees require to enter the initiative/achieve career progress. They should also include a framework for describing actions related to improving gender equalisation, with measurable goals that can be reported yearly, and directly compared between ARs published over different years, particularly appointing females to senior management positions or boards.

48 49 50 *Future research directions*

51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
This paper presents how gender issues are presented and formed across Korean family firms. It has also problematised what is accounted for in the sense that different forms of *linguaging* say different things, which may undermine or challenge the view that an AR is delivering one coherent message. The current analysis is limited to ARs of a limited number of Chaebols and has taken over a limited number of years. Future research could examine larger samples and include other forms of public communications to identify explicit progress in gender equalisation in Korean Chaebols.

Cultural and employment ethical change usually requires large players to engage and drive the change. In Korea, Chaebols are the largest forms of business establishments. Moreover, as they have been run by a single family over several decades, they are well-situated to understand the possibilities for women to enter employment and develop their careers. Female family members have been taking more active roles in running Chaebols in recent years but are currently not yet considered potential CEOs. Similarly, progress has been made in increasing female employment and career development towards senior management, but not nearly as close to the extent that **some** Western countries have achieved. Korean companies are part of global initiatives to increase female participation and representation, but to what extent do they follow recommendations from these initiatives, and how do they communicate their actions and results? And, to what extent do these communications lead to misinterpretations by the government and other organisations? These are possible research directions to explore. Besides Chaebols, future research can also investigate other forms of business such as start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises which have been gaining more importance in recent years.

References

- Akhmedova, A., Cavallotti, R., Marimon, F. and Campopiano, G. (2020), "Daughters' careers in family business: Motivation types and family-specific barriers", *Journal of family business strategy*, Vol. 11 No.3, p.100307.
- Ambri, S., Tahir, L. M., & Alias, R. A. (2019), "An overview of glass ceiling, tiara, imposter, and queen bee barrier syndromes on women in the upper echelons", *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp.8-13.
- Amsden, A.H. (1992), "Asia's next giant: South Korea and late industrialization", Oxford University Press on Demand.
- Baker, T. and Welter, F. (2017), "Come on out of the ghetto, please! -Building the future of entrepreneurship research", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 170-184. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-02-2016-0065>
- Banno, M., Filippi, E., & Trento, S. (2023), "Women in top echelon positions and their effects on sustainability: a review, synthesis and future research agenda", *Journal of management and governance*, Vol. 27 No.1, pp.181-251.
- Barnes, L.B. (1988), "Incongruent hierarchies: Daughters and younger sons as company CEOs", *Family Business Review*, Vol.1 No.1, pp.9-21.

- 2
3
4 Bassnett, S., Frandsen, A.C. and Hoskin, K. (2018), "The unspeakable truth of accounting:
5 On the genesis and consequences of the first "non-glottographic" statement form",
6 *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol.31 No.7, pp.2083-2107.
7
- 8 Bassyouny, H., Abdelfattah, T. and Tao, L. (2022), "Narrative disclosure tone: A review and
9 areas for future research", *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*,
10 p.100511.
11
- 12 Bauweraerts, J., Rondi, E., Rovelli, P., De Massis, A. and Sciascia, S. (2022), "Are family
13 female directors catalysts of innovation in family small and medium
14 enterprises?", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 16 No.2, pp. 314-354.
15
16 <https://doi.org/10.1002/sej.1420>
17
- 18 Bebbington, J. and Unerman, J. (2020), "Advancing research into accounting and the UN
19 Sustainable Development Goals", *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol. 33
20 No. 7, pp. 1657-1670.
21
- 22 Block, R.N., Park, J.Y. and Kang, Y.H. (2013), "Statutory leave entitlements across
23 developed countries: Why US workers lose out on work-family balance", *International
24 Labour Review*, Vol. 152 No. 1, pp. 125-143.
25
- 26 Bujaki, M. L., Durocher, S., Brouard, F., & Neilson, L. C. (2021). "Conflicting accounts of
27 inclusiveness in accounting firm recruitment website photographs". *European Accounting
28 Review*, Vol. 30 No.3, pp. 473-501.
29
- 30 Campopiano, G., De Massis, A., Rinaldi, F.R. and Sciascia, S. (2017), "Women's
31 involvement in family firms: Progress and challenges for future research", *Journal of
32 Family Business Strategy*, Vol. 8 No.4, pp.200-212.
33
- 34 Cavern-Rubio, J. A., Collazo-Mazon, A., & Amoros-Martinez, A. (2019). "Public recognition
35 of gender equality in the workplace and its influence on firms' performance". *Women's
36 Studies International Forum*, Vol. 76, p. 102273.
37
- 38 Chadwick, I. C., & Dawson, A. (2018). "Women leaders and firm performance in family
39 businesses: An examination of financial and nonfinancial outcomes", *Journal of family
40 business strategy*, Vol.9 No.4, pp. 238-249.
41
- 42 Charnock, R. and Hoskin, K. (2020), "SDG 13 and the entwining of climate and
43 sustainability metagovernance: an archaeological-genealogical analysis of goals-based
44 climate governance", *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol. 33 No. 7, pp.
45 1731-1759.
46
- 47 Cheng, S. (2021), "The male malady of globalization: phallogocentric nationalism in South
48 Korea". *Current Anthropology*, Vol.62 No. S23, pp. S79-S91.
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 2
3
4 Chrisman, J.J., Chua, J.H. and Steier, L.P. (2002), "The influence of national culture and
5 family involvement on entrepreneurial perceptions and performance at the state
6 level", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 26 No.4, pp.113-130.
- 7
8 Cho, J., & Lee, J. (2015), "Persistence of the gender gap and low employment of female
9 workers in a stratified labor market: Evidence from
10 South Korea", *Sustainability*, Vol.7 No.9, pp.12425-12451.
- 11
12 Cho, Y., Park, J., Ju, B., Han, S.J., Moon, H., Park, S., Ju, A. and Park, E. (2016), "Women
13 leaders' work-life imbalance in South Korean companies: A collaborative qualitative
14 study", *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, Vol. 27 No.4, pp.461-487.
- 15
16 Cho, Y., Kim, S., You, J., Han, H., Kim, M. and Yoon, S. (2021), "How South Korean
17 women leaders respond to their token status: Assimilation and resistance", *Human
18 Resource Development International*, Vol. 24 No.4, pp.377-400.
- 19
20 Choi, H. Y. (2022), "Working in the metaverse: Does telework in a metaverse office
21 have the potential to reduce population pressure in megacities? Evidence from young
22 adults in Seoul, South Korea", *Sustainability*, Vol. 14 No.6, 3629.
- 23
24 CJ Cheil Jedang (2015), *2015 Sustainability report*,
25 https://www.cj.co.kr/cj_files/2015%20Sustainability%20Report.pdf (accessed
26 13/10/2022).
- 27
28 CJ Cheil Jedang (2020), *Sustainability report 2020*,
29 https://www.cj.co.kr/cj_files/2020%20Sustainability%20Report.pdf (accessed
30 13/10/2022).
- 31
32 Curimbaba, F. (2002), "The dynamics of women's roles as family business managers",
33 *Family Business Review*, Vol. 15 No.3, pp.239-252.
- 34
35 CWDI. (2020), "2020 CWDI Report: Women Board Directors of Asia-Pacific
36 Companies". *Corporate Women Directors International*, Washington, USA.
37 [https://globewomen.org/CWDINet/index.php/2018-fortune-global-200-
38 companies-2/](https://globewomen.org/CWDINet/index.php/2018-fortune-global-200-companies-2/) (accessed 16/07/2023).
- 39
40 Davis, L.S. and Williamson, C.R. (2019), "Does individualism promote gender equality?",
41 *World Development*, 123, p.104627.
- 42
43 De Rosa, M. and McElwee, G. (2015), "An empirical investigation of the role of rural
44 development policies in stimulating rural entrepreneurship in the Lazio Region of
45 Italy", *Society and Business Review*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 4-22. [https://doi.org/10.1108/SBR-
46 08-2014-0041](https://doi.org/10.1108/SBR-08-2014-0041)
- 47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Dumas, C. (1989), "Understanding of father-daughter and father-son dyads in family-owned businesses", *Family Business Review*, Vol. 2 No.1, pp.31-46.
- Flick, U. (2018), *Designing qualitative research*. Sage.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge: Translated from the french by A M Sheridan Smith*. Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (2019), *Ethics: subjectivity and truth: essential works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Penguin UK.
- Furlotti, K., Mazza, T., Tibiletti, V. and Triani, S. (2019), "Women in top positions on boards of directors: Gender policies disclosed in Italian sustainability reporting.", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 26 No.1, pp.57-70.
- Garcia-Sanchez, I.M., Oliveira, M.C. and Martinez-Ferrero, J. (2020), "Female directors and gender issues reporting: The impact of stakeholder engagement at country level", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp.369-382.
- Garcia-Sanchez, I.M., Minutiello, V. and Tettamanzi, P. (2022), "Gender disclosure: The impact of peer behaviour and the firm's equality policies", *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, Vol. 29 No.2, pp.385-405.
- Groeneveld, S., Bakker, V., & Schmidt, E. (2020), "Breaking the glass ceiling, but facing a glass cliff? The role of organizational decline in women's representation in leadership positions in Dutch civil service organizations", *Public Administration*, Vol. 98 No. 2, pp.441-464.
- Gull, A.A., Abid, A., Latief, R. and Usman, M. (2021), "Women on board and auditors' assessment of the risk of material misstatement", *Eurasian Business Review*, 11(4), pp.679-708.
- Hambrick, D.C. and Mason, P.A. (1984), "Upper echelons: The organization as a reflection of its top managers", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 9 No.2, pp.193-206.
- Han, J., and Ling, L.H. (1998), "Authoritarianism in the hypermasculinized state: Hybridity, patriarchy, and capitalism in Korea", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 42 No.1, pp.53-78.
- Hechavarria, D.M., Terjesen, S.A., Ingram, A.E., Renko, M., Justo, R. and Elam, A. (2017), "Taking care of business: the impact of culture and gender on entrepreneurs' blended value creation goals", *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 48 No.1, pp.225-257.
- Heilman, M.E. (2012), "Gender stereotypes and workplace bias", *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 32, pp.113-135.

- 2
3 Hemmert, M. (2012). *Tiger management: Korean companies on world markets*. Routledge.
- 4
5 Henry, C., Foss, L., & Ahl, H. (2016), "Gender and entrepreneurship research: A review of
6 methodological approaches", *International Small Business Journal*, 34(3), 217-241.
- 7
8 Hillman, A.J., Shropshire, C. and Cannella Jr, A.A. (2007), "Organizational predictors of
9 women on corporate boards", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 50 No.4, pp.941-
10 952.
- 11
12 Hollander, B.S. and Bukowitz, W.R. (1990), "Women, family culture, and family business",
13 *Family Business Review*, Vol. 3 No.2, pp.139-151.
- 14
15 Hossain, D. M., Alam, M. S., Mazumder, M. M. M., & Amin, A. (2021). "Gender-related
16 discourses in corporate annual reports: an exploratory study on the Bangladeshi
17 companies". *Journal of Accounting & Organizational Change*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 394-415.
- 18
19 Hoyt, C.L. and Simon, S. (2011), "Female leaders: Injurious or inspiring role models for
20 women?", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 35 No.1, pp.143-157.
- 21
22 Hyundai (2015), The road to sustainability: 2015 Sustainability report,
23 https://www.hyundai.com/content/hyundai/ww/data/csr/data/0000000018/attach/english/Sustainability_Report_en_2015.pdf (accessed: 12/05/2023).
- 24
25 Hyundai (2020), *2020 Sustainability Report*,
26 <https://www.hyundai.com/worldwide/en/company/sustainability/sustainability-report>
27 (accessed 24/04/2023).
- 28
29 IATA (2023), *25by2025-Advancing gender balance by 2025*,
30 <https://www.iata.org/en/about/our-commitment/25-by-2025/> (accessed 16/07/2023)
- 31
32 Kim, A. (2015), "Yin and Yang and the representation of the financial crisis in Korea",
33 Doctoral dissertation, University of Leicester.
- 34
35 Kim, A.E. and Lee, C.M. (2014), "Neoliberalism and insecure employment in Korea:
36 Emergence of the working poor and worsening socio-economic polarization", *Korea
37 Observer*, Vol. 45 No. 2, p.255.
- 38
39 Kim, A. E., and Park, G. (2003), "Nationalism, Confucianism, work ethic and
40 industrialization in South Korea", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 33 No.1,
41 pp.37--49.
- 42
43 Kim, C., Teo, C., Nielsen, A., & Chum, A. (2023), "Macro-level gender equality and
44 women's depressive symptoms in South Korea: a longitudinal study", *Social Psychiatry
45 and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, Vol.58 No.3, pp.383-393.
- 46
47 Kim, E. (1994), "Child care leave systems: setting a research and policy agenda", *Women's
48 Studies Forum*, Vol. 10, pp. 5-23.
- 49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 2
3
4 Kim, E. H., & Choi, C. (Eds.). (1998). *Dangerous women: Gender and Korean nationalism*.
5 Psychology Press.
- 6
7 Kim, H.M. (2001), "Work, nation and hypermasculinity: The 'woman' question in the
8 economic miracle and crisis in South Korea", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 2: 53-68.
- 9
10 Kim, H.J. and Lee, C. (2022), "The 2022 South Korean Presidential Election and the Gender
11 Divide among the Youth", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 95 No.2, pp.285-308.
- 12
13 Kim, J.J. and Kim, S.J. (2018), "Women's leadership in family business organizations", In
14 *Korean Women in Leadership* (pp. 141-158). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- 15
16
17 Kim, K. (2017), "The changing role of employment status in marriage formation among
18 young Korean adults", *Demographic Research*, Vol.36 No.January-June, pp.145-172.
- 19
20
21 Kim, S., Won, E., Jeong, H. G., Lee, M. S., Ko, Y. H., Paik, J. W., ... & Han, K. M.
22 (2022), "Gender discrimination in workplace and depressive symptoms in female
23 employees in South Korea", *Journal of Affective Disorders*, Vol.306 No.June,
24 pp.269-275.
- 25
26
27 Koga, K. (2023), "Struggle for coalition-building: Japan, South Korea, and the
28 indo-Pacific", *Asian Politics & Policy*, Vol.15 No.1, pp.63-82.
- 29
30
31 Korean Air (2010), *Sustaining excellence - 2010 Sustainability report*,
32 [https://www.koreanair.com/content/dam/koreanair/ko/footer/about-us/sustainable-](https://www.koreanair.com/content/dam/koreanair/ko/footer/about-us/sustainable-management/report/2010_Korean%20Air%20Sustainability%20Report_en.pdf)
33 [management/report/2010_Korean%20Air%20Sustainability%20Report_en.pdf](https://www.koreanair.com/content/dam/koreanair/ko/footer/about-us/sustainable-management/report/2010_Korean%20Air%20Sustainability%20Report_en.pdf) (accessed
34 13/10/2022).
- 35
36
37 Korean Air (2021), *Sustaining Excellence - 2021 Sustainability report*, [https://ungc-](https://ungc-production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/cop_2022/515856/original/2022_Korean%20Air%20ESG%20Report_en.pdf?1658906766)
38 [production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/cop_2022/515856/original/2022_](https://ungc-production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/cop_2022/515856/original/2022_Korean%20Air%20ESG%20Report_en.pdf?1658906766)
39 [Korean%20Air%20ESG%20Report_en.pdf?1658906766](https://ungc-production.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/attachments/cop_2022/515856/original/2022_Korean%20Air%20ESG%20Report_en.pdf?1658906766) (accessed 13/10/2022).
- 40
41
42 Korean Herald (2021), "Number of women expected to top that of men in S. Korea in
43 2030", *Yonhap*, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210905000138>
44 (accessed 21/07/2023).
- 45
46
47 Kwon, J. (2019), "Globalization and business masculinities in South Korea: Top managers in
48 the industrial sector", *Social Sciences*, Vol.8 No.12, p.318.
- 49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 2
3
4 Lee, A. J. S. (2019), "Manly colors: Masculinity and mobility among globalizing Korean
5 men.", *Kalfou*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 199-230.
- 6
7 Lee, J., and Parpart, J.L. (2018), "Constructing gender identity through masculinity in CSR
8 reports: The South Korean case", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 27 No.4,
9 pp.309-323.
- 10
11 LG Electronics (2010), *2010 Sustainability report*,
12 [https://www.lg.com/global/sustainability/resource/2010%20Sustainability-](https://www.lg.com/global/sustainability/resource/2010%20Sustainability-Report[20210825_170555559].pdf)
13 [Report\[20210825_170555559\].pdf](https://www.lg.com/global/sustainability/resource/2010%20Sustainability-Report[20210825_170555559].pdf) (accessed 13/10/2022).
- 14
15
16
17 Loden, M. (1987), "Recognizing women's potential: No longer business as usual",
18 *Management Review*, Vol. 76 No. 12, p.44.
- 19
20
21 Ma, L. (2014), "Economic crisis and women's labor force return after childbirth: Evidence
22 from South Korea", *Demographic Research*, 31, pp.511-552.
- 23
24
25 Macve, R. (2015), *A conceptual framework for financial accounting and reporting: Vision,*
26 *tool, or threat?*, Routledge.
- 27
28
29
30 Manzi, F., & Heilman, M. E. (2021), "Breaking the glass ceiling: For one and
31 all?", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 120 No.2, pp.257-277.
- 32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Marlow, S. (2019), "Gender and entrepreneurship: past achievements and future possibilities", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 39-52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-05-2019-0090>
- Miyoshi-Jager, S. (2003). *Narratives of nation building in Korea: a genealogy of patriotism*. ME Sharpe.
- Moon, S. (2005), *Militarized modernity and gendered citizenship in South Korea*. Duke University Press.
- Nelson, T. and Constantinidis, C. (2017), "Sex and gender in family business succession research: A review and forward agenda from a social construction perspective", *Family Business Review*, Vol. 30 No.3, pp.219-241.
- Ng, P. Y., Dayan, M., & Di Benedetto, A. (2019), "Performance in family firm: Influences of socioemotional wealth and managerial capabilities", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol.102, pp.178-190.
- Ng, P.Y., Wood, B.P. and Bastian, B.L. (2022), "Reformulating the empowerment process through women entrepreneurship in a collective context", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 28 No. 9, pp. 154-176. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-06-2021-0479>

- 2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Nulleshi, S.G. and Kalonaityte, V. (2022), "Gender roles or gendered goals? Women's return to rural family business", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-09-2021-0152>
- O'Brien, K. M., Ganginis Del Pino, H. V., Yoo, S. K., Cinamon, R. G., & Han, Y. J. (2014), "Work, family, support, and depression: Employed mothers in Israel, Korea, and the United States", *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 61(3), 461-472.
- Park, I.H. and Cho, L.J. (1995), "Confucianism and the Korean family", *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 26 No.I, pp.117-134.
- Parpart, J.L. (2013), "Choosing silence: Rethinking voice, agency and women's empowerment", In *Secrecy and silence in the research process* (pp. 34-48). Routledge.
- Patrick, C., Stephens, H. and Weinstein, A. (2016), "Where are all the self-employed women? Push and pull factors influencing female labor market decisions", *Small Business Economics*, Vol. 46 No.3, pp.365-390.
- Peake, W. and Marshall, M.I. (2017), "Women's management practices and performance in rural female-owned family businesses", *Journal of Family Business Management*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 134-150.
- Raymo, J.M., Park, H., Xie, Y. and Yeung, W.J.J. (2015), "Marriage and family in East Asia: Continuity and change", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 41, p.471.
- Roberson, J.E. and Suzuki, N. (2003), *Men and masculinities in contemporary Japan*. London: Routledge.
- Rubio-Bafión, A. and Esteban-Lloret, N. (2016), "Cultural factors and gender role in female entrepreneurship", *Suma de Negocios*, Vol. 7 No.15, pp.9-17.
- Sahoo, D. K., & Lenka, U. (2016), "Breaking the glass ceiling: Opportunity for the organization", *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 48 No.6, pp.311-319.
- Samara, G., Jamali, D. and Lapeira, M. (2019), "Why and how should SHE make her way into the family business boardroom?", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 62 No.I, pp.105-115.
- Samsung (2015), *Global Harmony- 2015 Sustainability report*, <https://images.samsung.com/is/content/samsung/assets/global/our-values/resource/about-us-sustainability-report-and-policy-sustainability-report-2015-en.pdf> (accessed 13/10/2022).
- Samsung (2020), *A journey towards a sustainable future - 2020 sustainability report*, https://images.samsung.com/is/content/samsung/p5/uk/aboutsamsung/pdf/Sustainability_report_2020_en_F.pdf (accessed 13/10/2022).

- 2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Sharma, P. (2004), "An overview of the field of family business studies: Current status and directions for the future", *Family business review*, Vol. 17 No.1, pp.1-36.
- Sheerin, C., & Garavan, T. (2022). "Female leaders as 'Superwomen': Post-global financial crisis media framing of women and leadership in investment banking in UK print media 2014-2016". *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, Vol. 86, pp. 102307.
- Shin, K.-A. (2015), "The marginalization of permanent part-time women workers in organizations", *Journal of Korean Women's Studies*, Vol. 31 No.2, pp.131-79.
- Shin, K. Y. (2021), "Beyond# WithYou: The New Generation of Feminists and the# MeToo Movement in South Korea", *Politics & Gender*, Vol. 17 No.3, pp.507-513.
- Song, D., Jang, S. and Kim, E. (2010), "An analysis of factors affecting work-family conflict of Korean working people: focusing the effect of workplace support and familial support", *Social Welfare Policy*, 37,3, 27-52.
- Song, M.Y. and Lee, S.S.Y. (2019), "Are female part-time workers dualised in South Korea? Institutional structures and employment conditions of South Korean female part-time jobs", *In Dualisation of Part-Time Work*(pp. 289-316). Policy Press.
- Steyaert, C., (2016), 'After'context. In *A research agenda/or entrepreneurship and context*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sung, S. (2003), "Women reconciling paid and unpaid work in Korea", *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 37No. 4, pp.361-75.
- Sung, S. (2014), "Work-family balance issues and policies in Korea: towards an egalitarian regime?" In Sung, S. and Pascall, G. (eds) *Gender and Welfare States in East Asia: Confucianism or Gender Equality?* pp. 29--48. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stanton, P. and Stanton, J. (2002), "Corporate annual reports: research perspectives used. Accounting", *Auditing & Accountability Journal*, Vol.15 No.4, pp.478-500.
- Swartz, E.M., Scheepers, C.B. and Toefy, T. (2022), "Women entrepreneurs' opportunity identification of digital platform start-ups: emerging evidence from South Africa", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol.14 No.3, pp.362-374.
- Tao-Schuchardt, M., & Kammerlander, N. (2023). "Board diversity in family firms across cultures: A contingency analysis on the effects of gender and tenure diversity on firm performance", *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 100554.
- Terjesen, S. and Singh, V. (2008), "Female presence on corporate boards: A multi-country study of environmental context", *Journal of business ethics*, Vol. 83 No.1, pp.55-63.
- Vadnjaj, J. and Zupan, B. (2009), "The role of women in family businesses", *Economic and Business Review*, Vol. 11 No.2, pp.159-177.

- 2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
- Wang, C. (2010), "Daughter exclusion in family business succession: A review of the literature", *Journal of family and economic issues*, Vol. 31 No.4, pp.475-484.
- WEF, (2020). *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*.
https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (Accessed 10/12/2022).
- Welter, F. (2019), "Contexts and gender- looking back and thinking forward", *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 27-38. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-04-2019-0082>
- Weyer, B. (2007). "Twenty years later: explaining the persistence of the glass ceiling for women leaders", *Women in Management Review*, Vol. 22 No.6, pp.482-496.
- Won, S. Y. (2016), "State policy? Traditional gender stereotypes? Relative contributions of factors affecting positive work-family interface for working mothers in Korea", *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol. 23 No.2, pp.147-164.
- Won, S.Y. and Pascall, G. (2004), "A Confucian war over childcare? Practice and policy in childcare and their implications for understanding the Korean gender regime", *Social Policy & Administration*, Vol. 38 No.3, pp.270-289.
- Woodhams, C., Xian, H. and Lupton, B. (2015), "Women managers' careers in China: Theorizing the influence of gender and collectivism", *Human Resource Management*, Vol. 54 No.6, pp.913-931.
- You, J., Terjesen, S. and Bilimoria, D. (2018), "Women in the upper echelons: Women on corporate boards and in top management teams", In *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Business and Management*.
- Yun, S. (2023), "South Korea in 2022 Election Mudslinging, Threats from the North, and Deepening Economic Uncertainty", *Asian Survey*, Vol.63 No.2, pp.225-234.

Table I: Overview of selected Chaebols with employee and board data provided for financial year 2020- 2021. Industries are listed as mentioned for each Chaebol in the KOSPI index. Relevant members of the leading family with positions in the company or its affiliates are provided.

Chaebol	Male employees (%)	Female Employees (%)	Total Board of Directors	Female Board of Directors (%)	Industries	Leading family members (sex, company position)
Samsung (Samsung, 2020)	64%	36% [6]	266,675 [6]	18% ¹	Electronics, Semiconductors, Smartphones, Appliances, Insurance, Hotels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lee Jae-Yong (male, CEO and chairman) - Lee Boo-Jin (female, CEO of Shilla Hotel, a Samsung affiliate) - Lee Seo-Hyun (female, co-president of Cheil Industries, now merged with Samsung C&T; Chief Samsung Welfare Foundation)
Korean Air-Hanjin Group (Korean Air, 2021)	56%	44% [8]	20,965 [8]	9% ²	Airlines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cho Won-Tae (male, CEO and chairman Hanjin Group) - Cho Hyun-Ah (female, former vice-president of Korean Air) - Cho Hyun-Min (female, president of Hanjin Transportation Co.)
LG (LG, 2021)	80%	20% [9]	75,888 [9]	14% ³	Electronics, Chemicals, Display, Batteries, Telecom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Koo Kwang-Mo (male, CEO and chairman) - Koo Yeon-Kyung (female, CEO LG Welfare Foundation) - Chung Eui-Sun (male, Chairman) - Chung Sung-Yi (female, Adviser to Innocean: advertisement affiliate of Hyundai)
Hyundai Hyundai, 2020	91%	9% [10]	122,821 [10]	15% ⁴	Auto parts, Steel, Construction, Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chung Myung-Yi (female, Hyundai Commercial adviser) - Chung Yoon-Yi (female, Chief director Haevich Hotel & Resort: a Hyundai Unit)
CJ (CJ, 2020)	78%	22% [11]	6,844 [11]	14% ⁵	Food, Biochemicals, Logistics, -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lee Jay-Hyun (male, Chairman) - Lee Mie-Kyung (female, Vice-chairwoman; film producer) - Lee Jae-Hwan (male, Former vice-chairman,

International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship

					Entertainment, Movie theatres	now director of a CJ subsidiary) - Lee Sun-Ho (male, Director of CJ Global Business) - Lee Kyung-Hoo (female, Vice-president of CJ Enm Co Ltd)
--	--	--	--	--	----------------------------------	--

* Board Membership Data obtained from company websites on 24 April 2023 as per below:

1. <https://www.samsung.com/global/ir/governance-csr/board-of-directors/profile/>
2. <https://www.koreanair.com/gb/en/footer/about-us/corporate-governance/board/configuration>
3. <https://www.lg.com/global/investor-relations-company-info>
4. <https://www.hyundai.com/worldwide/en/company/ir/corporate-information/bod/board-of-directors>
5. <https://www.cj.eo.kr/en/about/management/corporate-governance>

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60



Figure 1: Ratio of female employees (Samsung, 2015, p. 42).

54x20mm (600 x 600 DPI)

		2017	2018	2019	Unit
Diversity and Inclusion					
Percentage of female employees*		45.0	43.0	40.2	%
Percentage of female employees by job functions ²	Product development	17.7	17.2	17.5	%
	Manufacturing	57.8	56.8	53.2	%
	Quality assurance	48.1	43.5	41.3	%
	& Environment, health and safety				
	Sales & Marketing	29.7	30.8	31.2	%
	Others	39.4	36.0	36.1	%
Percentage of female employees by Region	South Korea	25.3	25.2	24.9	%
	Southeast Asia & Southwest Asia & Japan	63.1	59.9	56.3	%
	China	39.5	40.3	34.9	%
	North America & Central and Latin America	34.8	34.4	35.1	%
	Europe	35.0	34.7	34.5	%
	Middle East	14.9	14.5	14.0	%
	Africa	33.6	36.5	37.7	%

Figure 2: Samsung's diversity statements (Samsung, 2020, p. 115).

54x22mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Social Data

The number of employees working at LG Electronics is 90,578 as of December 31, 2010. Among them, 31,840 work in Korea and 58,738 work in overseas offices. Approximately 64.8% of the total employees are either Korean workers dispatched abroad or locally recruited. Among the Korean employees, temporary employees numbered just 330, or 1.0% of the total. The resignation rate of 4.8% in 2009 was up 1.5% from the previous year. 1.3% of the total employees have disabilities.

The average age of the employees is 35.5 years old(average age for male employees is 37.3) and the female executives account for 1.5%. The average age for female executives is 47.6 years old(the average age level among the male executives is 50.3). The minimum wage for newly hired employees is 322% higher than the government set minimum wage. There is no salary gap between males and females.



Figure 3: Social data (LG Electronics, 2010, p. 78).

41x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

'Nano Expert' Jang Eun-Joo, the First Female Master at the Advanced Institute of Technology

After invested 13 years in the research and development of nanomaterials, Master Jang has become a leader of the field. In 2013, she was the only female scientist who was inducted as the master within Samsung Electronics, out of 12 newly inducted scientists. Master Jang says, "Nano-Chrysal technology was a brand new field when I first join Samsung in 2002. At first, I was the only scientist working on the subject. Our team and the number of scientist grew eventually as the company clear saw a potential in the technology and set a clear goal for commercialization." Over the years, Master Jang's research areas included LCD and LED TV panels. The recently launched Samsung's SUHD TV with eco-friendly design is one of her finest achievements. Master Jang reminded us that it is possible to pursue your passion and corporate interests at the same time. She mentioned, "The most important factor in success is putting into action." She added, "It is important to have a long-term perspective, no matter what the project or work that you are doing. Even if you fail, you walk away with a lesson that will enable you to do matter and make smart decision in the future."



Master Jang Eun-Joo,
Advanced Institute of Technology

Yoo Mi-Young, Director of Product Software Development Team, Visual Display Business

"Software will define our future." says Ms. Mi-Young Yoo, Vice President of Product Software Development for Samsung Visual Display division. Since joining the company back in 2000, Ms. Yoo has spent her entire career in the software development. In 2004, she successfully led commercialization of 'Digital TV Project.' At the time, all global leading TV manufactures were racing to introduce large-size digital TV models. Under Ms. Yoo's leadership, Samsung won the race and the company has remained TV industry ever since. Today, Software is the new game changer for Samsung." says Ms. Yoo who leads a team of leading software engineers dedicated to designing software that will change people's lives everywhere. What's really surprising is that 20% of the team members are women. "I think women have competitive edge in the field of software development. Because it requires the integration of many small elements and that's what women are good at." says confidently Ms. Yoo.



Vice President Yoo Mi-Young,
Visual Display Business

Figure 13: Interviews with female leaders (Samsung, 2015, p. 43).

42x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

+ Talent Management

Employee Demographic

As of the end of December 2021, Korean Air has a total of 19,409 employees, including overseas employees. The percentage of female employees, which is an important indicator of diversity, has remained at 45% for the past three years. The average length of service (based on full-time employees working in Korea) is 16.8 years. Korean Air offers the highest level of wage and welfare benefits in the airline industry in Korea, and ensures consistency of starting salary regardless of gender and job type.

category	Employment type		Job position/Level*	
	Full-time	Temporary	Manager level	Non-manager level
	Male	10,625	159	3,079
Female	8,394	231	2,047	6,347
Total	19,019	390	5,126	13,893

* Job position/Level: Based on full-time employees (As of the December 31, 2021, excluding executive directors)

Figure 4: Korean Air Employee Demographic (Korean Air, 2021, p. 57)

30x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Competitive Employee with Competitive CJ

'Injaejil(People First)'

Based on its founding philosophy of 'People First' - putting top priority on people, CJ Cheil-Jedang is committed to the growth and development of its employees. With the belief that the highest competitiveness lies in the employees, we aim to be reborn into a company that grows and leaps toward the world together with the employees.

Core Idea of 'Injaejil(People First)' Philosophy



New Recruitments (Unit:persons)

Category	2013	2014	2015
New recruits in Korea	519	472	670
Female	125	141	209
New recruits overseas	927	806	1,201
Total	1,446	1,278	1,871

Figure 5: People First (CJ Cheil Jedang, 2015, p. 58).

54x24mm (600 x 600 DPI)

RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY

CJ Cheil Jedang's recruitment process is fair and unbiased. It is not based on gender, race, religion, or age. In 2020, we hired a total of 54 socially disadvantaged individuals; among them, 15 were women. We have 55 disabled employees.

REMALE: STAFFS

In line with CJ Cheil Jedang's diversity policy, we have recruited female managers. The proportion of female employees increased in 2020. The proportion of female employees increased from 19% in 2019 to 21% in 2020. The proportion of female employees in revenue-generating departments increased from 11% in 2019 to 12% in 2020.

Ratio of female staffs

CATEGORY	UNIT	ZOS	2019	2020
Total No. of staffs	%	1018	127	129
Ratio of female employees in Junior Managerial positions	%	HD	19.0	20.0
Ratio of female employees in revenue-generating departments*	%	11	173	119
Share of women in STEM-related positions**	%	211	315	314

* Full-time employees of CJ Cheil Jedang (Sales, Marketing, R&D, etc.)
 **STEM: Total No. of Eng. (1A), Math

REINFORCEMENT OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP

In line with CJ Cheil Jedang's diversity policy, we have recruited female managers. The proportion of female employees increased in 2020. The proportion of female employees increased from 19% in 2019 to 21% in 2020. The proportion of female employees in revenue-generating departments increased from 11% in 2019 to 12% in 2020.

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALE LEADERSHIP

On May 1st 2020, CJ Cheil Jedang held a meeting with female employees. The meeting was held to discuss the current situation of female employees and to provide support. The meeting was held in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was held in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HUMAN RESOURCES

CJ Cheil Jedang hires regular and temporary staff. The total number of staffs in 2020 is 1,290, an increase from 1,270 in 2019. The total number of staffs in 2020 is 1,290, an increase from 1,270 in 2019. The total number of staffs in 2020 is 1,290, an increase from 1,270 in 2019.

CATEGORY	UNIT	2019	2020
Total No. of staffs		1,270	1,290
Regular	Full-time	1,174	1,184
	Part-time	96	106
Short-term/Temporary	Part-time	100	106
	Contract	99	99

Figure 6: Female staff and leadership (CJ Cheil Jedang, 2020, p. 49).

27x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Inclusive Workplace

Today, women comprise 27 percent of our workforce in Korea and 49 percent of the company's entire workforce, a ratio that continues to trend upward. To promote more inclusive and creative work environment, we operate a telecommuting system and flexible work schedule so employees with children can spend more time at home if needed. We are expanding the systems and programs for work-family balance, including leave for fertility treatment, longer daycare center operation, and an extended parental leave. We are also making concerted efforts to encourage the next generation of women leaders and promote their professional development in the company by increasing the number of female executives and team leaders, providing leadership trainings and mentoring programs.

Figure 7: Inclusive workplace (Samsung, 2015, p. 42).

54x10mm (600 x 600 DPI)

Support for Working Mothers (Korea)

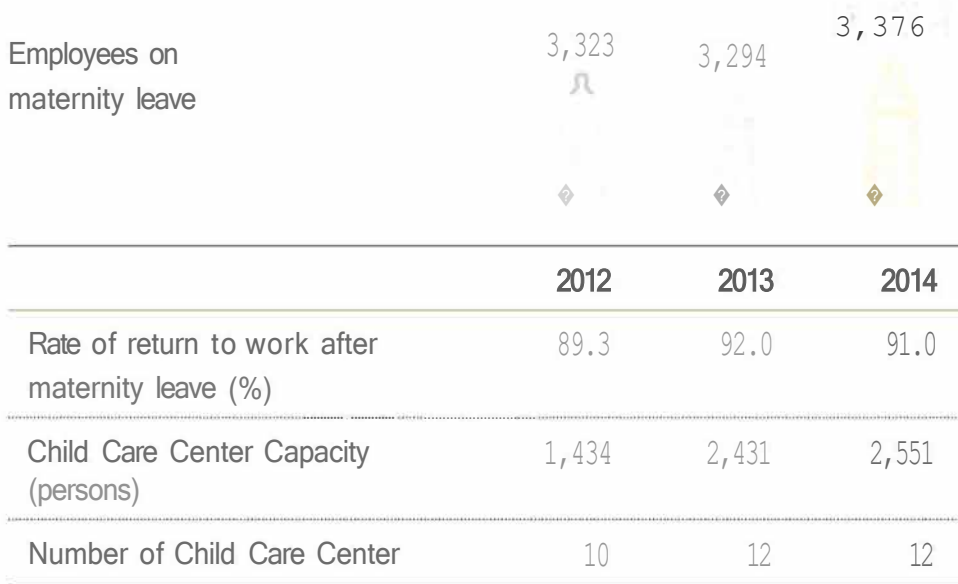


Figure 8: Female employees and maternity support (Samsung, 2015, p. 43).

44x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7 Expanding Female Workforce Korean Air has continuously increased the employment of
8 female workers, and as of the end of 2009, women accounted for 31% of the total workforce.
9 To create a women-friendly working environment where women are encouraged to retain their
10 careers, Korean Air offers support above and beyond that mandated by labor laws. For example,
11 Korean Air's female cabin crew are allowed to take maternity leave upon learning of pregnancy,
12 and those who are diagnosed as infertile by specialists and wish to seek artificial insemination
13 or in-vitro fertilization can take a leave of absence for up to one year. In recognition of these
14 efforts to expand and retain the employment of female workers, in December 2008 Korean Air
15 became the first Korean company to enter into a "Women-friendly Company" agreement with
16 the Ministry of Gender Equality (MOGE).
17
18

19
20 Figure 9: Expanding female workforce (Korean Air, 2010, p. 58).

21 54x21mm (600 x 600 DPI)
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Employee Turnover

Both number of employee turnover and turnover rate decreased compared with the previous year.

	2012	2013	2014
number of employee turnover (Person)	1,018	1,343	1,114
Employee turnover rate(%.)	1.70	2.13	1.72

GRI G4-LA1

Return to Work after Parental Leave

The number of employees who use parental leave continues to increase. As the company adopts policies of inducing employees to return to work after their parental leaves, the post-parental leave retention has improved, reaching 95% in 2014.

		2012	2013	2014
number of employees on parental leave (Person)	Male	18	18	19
	Female	69	96	150
Retention rate after parental leave (%)	Male	700	94	95
	Female	91	97	97

Figure 10: Hyundai's parental leave (Hyundai, 2015, p. 113).

26x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

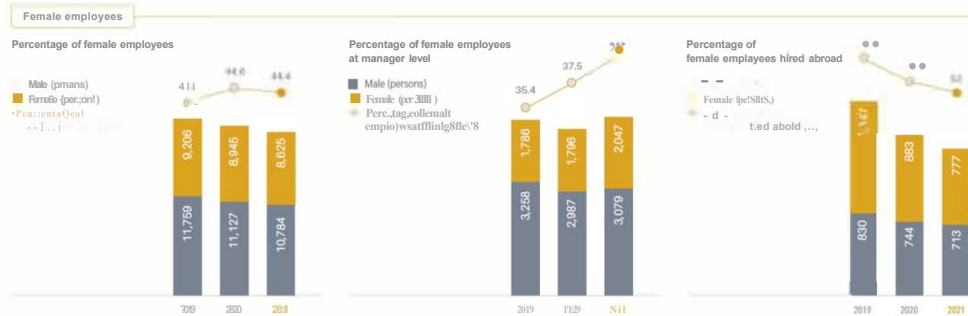


Figure 11: Korean Air female employees and managers (Korean Air, 2021, p.58).

54x17mm (600 x 600 DPI)

Women Employees by Rank (%)

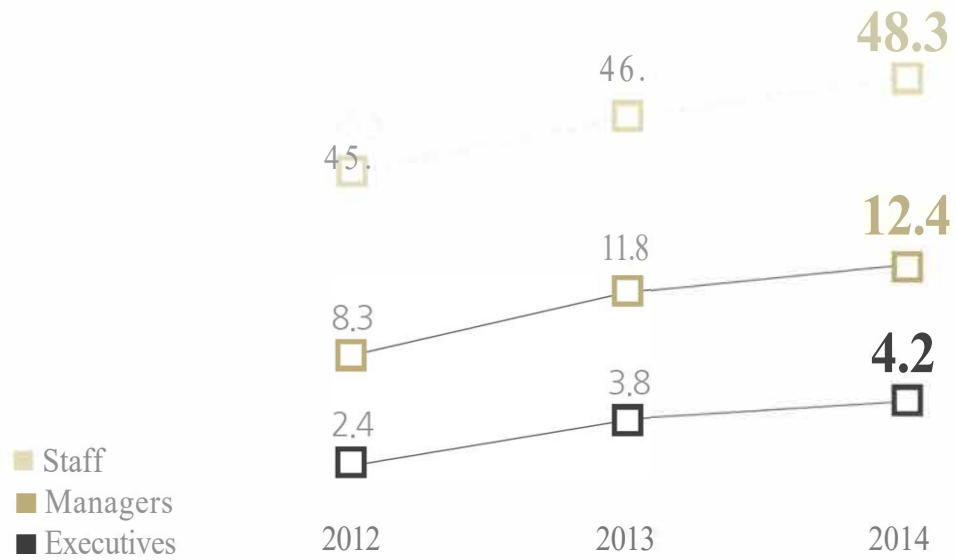


Figure 12: Female employees by rank (Samsung, 2015, p. 43).

42x30mm (600 x 600 DPI)