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The Title of Winning Paper: Strategic Leadership of Female Middle Managers: How Do Female Middle Managers Benefit the Bottom Line?

A short 100 word description

Research on women in leadership positions has largely focused on the strategic leadership level, showing that increased female representation can benefit organizational performance. However, the effects of female middle management on organizational performance have been largely neglected. The current study addresses how female representation in middle management predicts organizational profitability, via the improvement of High Performance Work System (HPWS). By analyzing the multi-wave (2009, 2011, and 2013) Workplace Panel Survey (WPS) data collected from 1,248 organizations in South Korea, we found that a larger proportion of female middle managers translated into a higher level of organizational profitability, due to HPWS improvement. However, this female middle management advantage appeared only in the presence of a high level of gender diversity of subordinates.

A longer abstract

Compared to what we know about female strategic leadership, our knowledge of female representation in middle management and its implications for organizational performance is rather limited. This is surprising given that women are more represented at the middle management level than at the strategic leadership level (Adler, 1993) and are generally more effective as middle-level leaders than men (Eagly, Karau, & Makhijani, 1995). We test our model using archival data from South Korea, as we expect a female middle management advantage to be strong in this collectivistic culture. We focus on the improvement of High Performance Work System (HPWS) as an under-examined (Sikora & Ferris, 2014; Vermeeren, 2014) and yet important mechanism that explains how female representation in middle management translates into organizational performance in the form of profitability. HPWS refers to “a group of separate but interconnected human resource (HR) practices designed to enhance employees’ skills and effort” (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang, & Takeuchi, 2007, p. 1069). By improvement, we mean the intensifying and strengthening of the existing HPWS, which result in positive change in the use of HPWS. The improvement of strategic HR practices is likely to enhance organizations’ dynamic capabilities (cf. Roberson et al., 2017), and is thus essential for organizational performance (Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Bear, 2012; Vermeeren, 2014; Wright & McMahan, 1992). The present research speaks directly to why female representation in middle management is important to organizational performance and how female middle management advantage translates into organizational performance. In so doing, the present research advances the knowledge of gender in management (particularly middle management) from a functional perspective and highlights the significance of HPWS in explaining the implications of gender composition of employees for organizational performance.

Bio

Min-Kyu Joo is a doctoral candidate studying organizational behavior and human resource management in the C. T. Bauer College of Business at the University of Houston. His research interests include diversity in the organization, leadership, mentoring, and strategic human resource management. He has published in academic and practitioner publications such as *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Asia Pacific Business Review*, and *Quarterly Journal of Labor Policy* among others. He has also published several books and book chapters (e.g., *Management in South Korea Revisited*, 2016). In addition, he is a winner for the Samsung Economic Research Institute Best Paper Award 2018 in Academy of Management. Prior to his full-time graduate studies, he worked as a research associate for the Korea Labor Institute and as a HR research fellow in one of the largest law firms in South Korea, Kim & Chang, serving multinational corporations. He has industry certifications such as registered fund manager, investment counselor, future trading counselor, and financial planner.