

The effects of LMX on gender discrimination and subjective career success

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The objectives of this study are to identify the effects of leader–member exchange (LMX) on employees' perception of gender discrimination and subjective career success and to examine the relationship between gender discrimination and subjective career success. Data was collected from hotel employees in Seoul, South Korea. To accomplish the objectives, structural equation modeling was conducted. The first result was that LMX had a significant positive impact on subjective career success. Second, LMX impacted differently gender discrimination (employment and promotion discrimination, and wage and training discrimination). Third, each gender discrimination factor influenced differently subjective career success. Understanding the relationships among LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success can suggest practical solutions for efficient human resource management to hotel managers.

Keywords: gender discrimination, leader–member exchange, subjective career success

Key points

- 1 The study helps understanding the relationships among LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success.
- 2 This study suggests that organizations need to evaluate and diagnose potential gender discrimination issues.
- 3 It also provides practical implications for effective human resource management and a better work environment for employees to hotel managers.

Today's hotel industry faces a multitude of challenges unlike those experienced in the past. From the rapid expansion and globalization of international hotel brands, to unprecedented market segmentation and the struggle to meet guests' ever-increasing expectations of higher quality hotel service experiences, hotels are being tested in ways they never

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have before. As a result, to maximize organizational performance and guest satisfaction, the role of frontline employees has become more important than ever before. Particularly in the hotel industry, employees are greatest assets who provide a sustainable competitive advantage (Lawler 2000). Hotel frontline employees play a leading role in creating guest service experiences that not only provide instant satisfaction (Bitner, Booms and Tetreault 1990), but also build lasting relationships with customers (Kusluvan 2003). Frontline employees who are managed well provide higher quality customer service, which in turn leads to increased enterprise success. Consequently, managers in the hotel industry need to learn how to supervise their staff to achieve, maintain, and maximize job outcomes.

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory, which has received much attention from scholars and practitioners, explains how the relationship between managers (leaders) and frontline employees (members) can not only improve employees' work-related performance (Graen, Novak and Sommerkamp 1982; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), but also increase job satisfaction (Gerstner and Day 1997; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), strengthen positive organizational commitment (Nystrom 1990), and increase subjective career success (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden 2001). Because high-quality service is delivered by satisfied employees (Liao, Hu and Chung 2009), and good relationships between leaders and members yield higher job satisfaction (Aryee and Zhen 2006; Erdogan and Enders 2007; Robbins 2003), managers should find ways to communicate with their staff effectively; to understand employees' wants, needs, and opinions of work circumstances; and to establish positive interpersonal relationships with them. Moreover, employees who have a good relationships with their supervisors tend to exhibit higher commitment to their jobs (Yukl 2002), and lower turnover intention (Lam 2003). High commitment and low turnover intention (Herrbach and Mignonac 2012), vital for both individual employees and their employers, may also result from employees' perception of career success. Employees' perception of their career success, in turn, depends on job and career satisfaction, which also is essential to both the employees themselves and their organizations, because it leads to employee loyalty (Aryee and Chay 1994; Bozionelos 2008; Joiner, Bartram and Garreffa 2004) and contributes to higher productivity and organizational performance (Peluchette 1993; Wang et al. 2011). Additionally, positive interpersonal relationships between leaders and members may relieve employees' stress, including stress caused by gender discrimination (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Liden and Maslyn 1998), and help them to resolve problems related to gender discrimination.

Significant research examining the effects of gender discrimination in the workplace has shown that gender discrimination in employee selection, evaluation, promotion, or reward processes (Gutek, Cohen and Tsui 1996) has a negative impact not only on employees' organizational effectiveness and organizational performance, but also on their subjective career success (Herrbach and Mignonac 2012). For example, studies show that the majority of female hospitality industry managers feel that they receive different treatment in promotion and salaries from male employees in the United State (Woods and

Kavanaugh 1994), and a difference in salaries exists between men and women who are financial controllers in the hospitality industry (Burgess 2003). Burgess explained that the disparity is the result of men being chosen over similarly qualified women for more highly ranked positions that pay higher salaries. Burgess further argues that if men are better qualified than women, they will get better jobs with higher salaries; however, even where hotel work requires similar skills regardless of gender type (Ng and Pine 2003), female employees are not likely to feel that they have the same opportunities for employment and promotion that their male counterparts do.

Though female employees account for a large proportion of hospitality industry employees (Lucas 1995; Purcell 1993), it is still difficult for them to get high-level positions; and, when they do, they earn less than their male counterparts (Brownell 1994; Diaz and Umbreit 1995; Ng, Fosh and Naylor 2002). According to the report of Statistics Korea in 2014 (Korean Statistical Information Service, nd), 55.4% of employees working in the accommodation and restaurant industry in South Korea are women. Gender discrimination is particularly problematic in South Korea. Among OECD countries, South Korea had the largest gender wage gap, with females earning 37.5% less than males in 2013, which was much higher than the gaps of New Zealand (4.2%), Belgium (5.8%), and Japan (27.4%) (Herald Economics 2014). Additionally, female employees in South Korea are four times more likely than males to perceive gender discrimination in the workplace (The Dailynews 2010). In light of this situation, further research is warranted to examine the notable gender discrimination in the hotel industry of South Korea. Other types of discrimination exist in addition to gender discrimination, including race, ethnicity, and class discrimination (Adib and Guerrier 2003). However, in the case of the Korean hotel industry, most employees are the same ethnicity and have similar educational backgrounds. Therefore, investigating gender discrimination in Korea is simpler and clearer, and perhaps more meaningful, than in other countries.

Taken together, it is worthwhile to investigate and understand frontline hotel employees' perceptions of LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success. These interconnected and often interdependent factors affect employees' job outcomes, in turn affecting customer satisfaction and, ultimately, organizational performance. Yet, little empirical research has attempted to integrate these variables and investigate the relationships among them, though LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success have been studied separately. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of the leader-member relationship on gender discrimination and subjective career success, and the effects of gender discrimination on subjective career success. This research also investigates how female and male employees perceive gender discrimination in the hotel industry. This research will shed some light on the ways in which supervisors can design practical strategies to develop desirable relationships with their subordinates, thereby improving their employees' subjective career success and lowering their perception of gender discrimination. Identifying the relationships among these variables will benefit human resource management.

Conceptual background and hypotheses

Leader–member exchange

Leader–member exchange, or LMX, is the formation in the workplace of a work-related relationship, with varying degrees of quality, between each subordinate and his or her immediate superior (Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975). The LMX theory evolved from ALS (average leadership style), a theory that focused on the leader's uniform leadership behavior towards all of his or her subordinates within the same work unit (Dunegan, Duchon and Uhl-Bien 1992), and later developed into the vertical dyadic linkage approach to understanding the manager-employee working relationship (Dansereau, Cashman and Graen 1973). Contrary to the ALS and vertical dyadic linkage theories, LMX argues for the development of individual and qualitatively differentiated social exchange relationships between leaders and each of their subordinates (Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975), which may result in a sense of discrimination or inequality among subordinates. The major focus of LMX theory is the establishment of unique reciprocal or mature relationships, such as partnership and fellowship, between leaders and each of their followers as effective leadership processes that will ultimately increase the chance of desired organizational outcomes (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995) such as employee job satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and performance. Because employees' outcomes and their service delivery level can be influenced by their supervisors (Hartline and Ferrell 1996), the relationship between leaders and members is an important factor in employees' performance (Gerstner and Day 1997).

Previous studies have suggested that high-quality LMX, which means a better relationship between leaders and members, is positively related to employees' behaviors (Dansereau, Graen and Haga 1975; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), resulting in low turnover intention (Gerstner and Day 1997; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995; Lam 2003; Lee et al. 2010), increased retention (Dansereau, Cashman and Graen 1973; Graen, Novak and Sommerkamp 1982), improved organizational citizenship behavior (Kim, O'Neil and Cho 2010), subordinates' increased communicative responsiveness (Borchgrevink and Boster 1994), and improved performance ratings (Farh et al. 1998), as well as increased positive attitudes among subordinates, such as organizational commitment (Ansari, Hung and Aafaqi 2007; Lee 2005; Mazibuko and Boshoff 2003; Nystrom 1990), a higher level of trust (Testa 2002), psychological empowerment (Kim and George 2005), job satisfaction (Dulebohn et al. 2011; Erdogan and Enders 2007; Liao, Hu and Chung 2009) and perception of empowerment (Deci, Connell and Ryan 1989). These studies indicate that the higher the LMX relationship, the more positive the employees' responses.

Gender discrimination

Employees perceive discrimination when they are treated somewhat differently based of employees' demographic characteristics in the workplace (Mirage 1994). Discrimination can occur during employment decision-making processes, such as employee selection, evaluation, promotion, or reward procedures when decision-makers base those decisions on an individual's personal characteristics, such as age, sex, or race, rather than on the

employees' or prospective employees' job-related skills (Guttek, Cohen and Tsui 1996). Women perceive gender discrimination as one of the biggest barriers to achieving their goals at all managerial levels (Herrbach and Mignonac 2012; Metz and Tharenou 2001). Researchers have studied gender discrimination and its influence on individual and organizational performance. For example, Shin and Jin (2004) examined gender discrimination in two subdimensions: 1) employment and promotion discrimination, and 2) wage and training discrimination. Employment and promotion discrimination occurs during the hiring process, as well as when employers reward job performance differently among different employees. Wage and training discrimination occurs when employers unfairly make wage and salary decisions based on gender, or unfairly (and inconsistently) base employees' opportunities to participate in organizational training on gender. Among hospitality managers, female managers perceived gender discrimination related to promotion and salary while male managers perceived it evenly in general (Woods and Kavanaugh 1994). In addition, female workers expressed unequal payment as a leading obstacle to their career advancement in hospitality management (Brownell 1994). Moreover, Goldman et al. (2008) claimed that employment discrimination causes negative outcomes such as legal issues and organizational losses. As such, it is crucial for managers to understand how male and female employees perceive gender discrimination differently, and to react to those perceptions accordingly, to minimize undesirable work behaviors that negatively impact the organization.

Subjective career success

Career success is a vital issue for both individual employees and the organizations they work for (Ng et al. 2005), as its outcomes such as high commitment and low turnover are essential to the success of both parties (Herrbach and Mignonac 2012). Career success has been defined as the positive psychological and accumulated work-related outcomes derived from an individual's work experience (Ng et al. 2005; Seibert and Kraimer 2001). Career success has been also defined both objectively and subjectively (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley 1990; Ng et al. 2005; Seibert and Kraimer 2001). Objective career success is measured from an external perspective by evaluating outcomes such as salary and promotion. Subjective career success, on the other hand, is measured based on an individual's subjective evaluation of factors such as career satisfaction, job satisfaction, and opportunities to achieve goals and expectations (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley 1990; Herrbach and Mignonac 2012; Ng et al. 2005; Seibert and Kraimer 2001).

Several scholars (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; De Vos and Soens 2008; Hall 2002; Heslin 2005; Wang et al. 2011) have emphasized subjective career success over objective success because of the characteristics of the current contemporary work environment. Hall (2002) presented two specific reasons for this emphasis: 1) there is no absolute measurement to measure career success in the contemporary working environment, and 2) people's careers have more meaning when they are evaluated by the individuals themselves. Accordingly, this research focuses on subjective career success as a crucial factor in perception of career success (Wang et al. 2011).

The relationship among LMX, gender discrimination and subjective career success

LMX theory hypothesizes that an employee may be categorized by a leader into one of two distinct groups, the high-quality LMX group or the low-quality LMX group (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995), based on the quality of the social exchange relationship that develops between them over time (Graen and Cashman 1975; Liden and Graen 1980). Members of the former group develop a trust-based interpersonal relationship with the leader, and thus are more likely to receive the leader's attention and support, in addition to increased opportunities, greater work-related benefits, and inclusion in more beneficial social networks (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Liden and Maslyn 1998). According to Sparrowe and Liden (1997), high-quality LMX employees are more readily integrated into the leader's personal network. Establishing a social network is related to procurement of resources and information and, ultimately, to career success (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden 2001). Also, communication, trust, and perseverance are predicting variables to career success in the hospitality industry (Cichy and Schmidgall 1996). Therefore, there is a relationship between an individual's social network and his or her career success (Burt 1992, 1997; Ibarra 1995; Podolny and Baron 1997).

Further, supervisors' support is positively associated with subordinates' job satisfaction (Jurik and Winn 1987; Van Voorhis et al. 1991); and, Wayne, Liden and Sparrowe (1994) found that positive relationships between supervisors and their subordinates cause employees to feel that their work is more meaningful and that they are more competent, which ultimately leads to better outcomes in their jobs. Specifically, Wang et al. (2011) found that in Taiwan, the most powerful impact on hotel employees' perceptions of career success was organizational context, which includes factors such as wages, opportunities for training and promotions, and leadership. Based on a review of the literature, the first hypothesis proposed:

Hypothesis 1: LMX positively impacts employees' subjective career success.

Employees with high-quality LMX tend to receive more support such as information, influence, confidence, and concern from their leaders (Graen and Scandura 1987) and have stronger work-related emotional attachments (Springer 2006) than employees who experience lower quality relationship. In addition, Goldman (2001) has found that the quality of supervisors' support influences employees' perceptions of workplace discrimination. Schaffer and Riordan (2013) claimed that perception of abnormal treatment indicates a vital factor of discrimination in the workplace. James (2000) proposed that study of the degrees of social support between employees could enhance understanding of discrimination in the organization. Further, Dienesch and Liden (1986), and Liden and Maslyn (1998) revealed that the stress caused by gender discrimination may be relieved when leaders and subordinates have positive interpersonal relationships. In other words, these relationships may lessen difficulties in the workplace, including helping to reduce problems caused by gender discrimination. Further, Rosen, Harris and Kacmar (2011) proposes that employees in high-quality LMX are more likely to feel that their supervisors may protect them if they are in less

favorable working environment. Based on a review of the literature, the second hypothesis proposed:

Hypothesis 2: LMX negatively impacts employees' perception of gender discrimination.

In Zhong and Couch's 2013 study, female hospitality students believe that females face significant obstacles to career advancement in the hospitality industry. According to Gutek, Cohen and Tsui (1996), women perceive gender discrimination differently, and more intensely, than men do. When women perceive organizational discrimination against their gender, the manner in which they react and express their feelings of deprivation can be explained by the theory of collective relative deprivation. Employees who perceive gender discrimination against their own gender not only feel that the organization favors the other gender in terms of hiring and promotions, but also perceive that they have less power in their job and believe the discrimination causes workplace conflict. They also experience decreased self-efficacy and develop negative attitudes toward their jobs. Also, Herrbach and Mignonac (2012) claimed that employees' perceptions of gender discrimination are a critical factor that drives their perceptions of their success as there is a negative relationship between perceived gender discrimination and subjective career success. Supervisors' stereotyped perception toward their employees based on social role could be barriers for female employees' career advancing (Hoobler, Wayne and Lemmon 2009). According to Ng and Pine's (2003) study in Hong Kong and Brownell's (1994) study in the United States, female employees in both countries perceive gender discrimination, such as male-dominated workplaces and discrepancies between men and women in salaries, promotion, and training, as barriers to career development. Similarly, Cotter et al. (2001) showed that when a glass ceiling effect exists, discrimination against an individual's gender becomes an obstacle to his or her career. Based on a review of the literature, the third hypothesis proposed.:

Hypothesis 3: Employees' perception of gender discrimination negatively impacts subjective career success.

Methods

Sample

The target population for this study was hotel employees working in chain hotels in Seoul, South Korea. A convenience sampling method was used to collect data. Human resource managers of 13 hotel brands were contacted and asked to voluntarily participate in the study. Seven 5-star international chain hotels and two 4-star domestic chain hotels agreed to participate in the on-site survey. The managers distributed a questionnaire and a consent letter which indicated the purpose of the research and confidentiality of surveying. Three hundred self-administered questionnaires were given to employees, who were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential. After employees completed

the survey, they put the questionnaires in the box, and the managers collected them and delivered them to the researcher.

Measurements

Survey instruments were adapted from previous studies and modified to fit this study. The variables for the constructs were extracted from the following studies: 7 items from Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) for leader–member exchange (e.g. ‘my boss helps my work when I face some problems during performing my job’), 12 items from Shin and Jin (2004) for gender discrimination (e.g. ‘female workers tend to be excluded from training programs’); and 5 items from Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley (1990) for subjective career success (e.g. ‘I am satisfied with my career with regard to developing new skill and ability’). All variables were measured using 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (‘strongly disagree’) to 5 (‘strongly agree’).

Results

Profile of respondents

A total of 261 usable questionnaires were returned, representing an 87% response rate. The respondents’ demographic characteristics showed that 57.9% were male and 33% of them were between the ages of 30 and 34. Around 58% of respondents were single, and 81.2% held college degrees. Also, 24.5% indicated that they had held their jobs between five and less than nine years and 24.1% between one and less than five years.

Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis

Prior to analyzing the impact of LMX on gender discrimination and subjective career success, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal component analysis with orthogonal varimax rotation on three variables to check whether the information on three variable scales can be categorized into common factors and to confirm the suitability of measurement tools (Munro 2000) for further analysis. All three variables factorized clearly and confirmed the criterion validity. As shown in Table 1, first, one factor of LMX included seven variables explaining 64.066% of the variance in the data with factor loadings greater than 0.5 and eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The factor analysis of this factor demonstrated acceptable validity with a Bartlett Test of Sphericity value of 1052.714 and a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy of 0.904. Second, two factors of gender discrimination – one of which was labeled wage and training discrimination, the other employment and promotion discrimination – each included six variables explaining 57.381% and 8.827% of the variance in the data with factor loadings greater than 0.5 and eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The factor analysis of these factors showed acceptable validity with a Bartlett Test of Sphericity value of 2084.886 and a KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.916. Third, one factor of subjective career success included five variables explaining 67.589% of the variance in the data with factor loadings greater than 0.5 and eigenvalue greater than 1.0. The factor analysis of this factor showed

Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis of LMX, gender discrimination and subjective career success

	Factor loadings	Eigen value	Variance explained (%)	Cronbach's alpha
LMX				
lmx6: My boss is satisfied with my work.	.853	4.485	64.066	.906
lmx7: My boss understands problems and needs of my work.	.823			
lmx2: My boss knows my potential ability.	.813			
lmx3: My boss helps my work when I face some problems during performing my job.	.810			
lmx5: When I need my boss' help, he/she helps me at personal sacrifice.	.803			
lmx4: My boss supports my decision and trusts me.	.799			
lmx1: My boss and I have similar opinion regarding job performance.	.693			
Gender discrimination				
Wage and training discrimination				
sd11: Female workers are tended to exclude for training program.	.871	6.886	57.381	.886
sd12: Male workers are asked to attend training program preferentially.	.826			
sd6: The rate of wage increase for female workers is lower than that of male.	.679			
sd10: Career development programs for female workers are lack.	.668			
sd9: Performance assessment is unfavorable for female workers.	.626			
sd5: Wage of female workers is lower than that of male.	.595			
Employment and promotion discrimination				
sd2: Male workers are more preferred to professional jobs than female.	.834	1.059	8.827	.889
sd3: It is difficult for female workers to transfer departments that are favorable to promotion.	.796			
sd1: It is more difficult for female workers to get a job than male.	.715			
sd4: Female workers get lower performance assessment than male.	.676			
sd7: Female workers' promotions are more unfavorable than males'.	.616			
sd8: It is difficult for female workers to promote top executives.	.616			
Subjective career success				
scs2: I am satisfied my career in aspect of promotion.	.856	3.379	67.589	.880
scs4: I am satisfied my career in aspect of developing new skill and ability.	.837			
scs3: I am satisfied my career in aspect of wage.	.830			
scs5: I am satisfied my career in aspect of achieving career goal.	.808			
scs1: I am satisfied my career in aspect of what I have accomplished in my job.	.778			

acceptable validity with a Bartlett Test of Sphericity value of 672.728 and a KMO measure of sampling adequacy of 0.836. The results of exploratory factor analysis of LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success produced a clean factor structure with high factor loadings and acceptable validity. To verify reliability and internal consistency within factors, reliability analysis was conducted and the results showed that alpha coefficient of factors from four factors ranged from 0.880 to 0.906, which were over the minimum threshold of 0.6 for acceptable reliability for further analyses (Nunnally 1967).

Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to verify the convergent and discriminant validity of the proposed model. Table 2 reports the results of the CFA, including standardized item loading estimates, factor names, construct reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). To evaluate convergent and discriminant validity, covariance structure analysis was employed (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Bagozzi and Yi 1988; Fornell and Larcker 1981). As shown in Table 2, CR (t-values) of the variables in each of the four factors were more than 1.96 ($p < 0.05$) (Anderson and Gerbing 1988), and factor loading values of the variables were more than 0.5 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988), confirming the convergent validity. Also, the construct reliability values were more than 0.7 and the AVE was greater than 0.5 for the four factors, confirming the convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). To examine the discriminant validity, the constructs' shared variances between constructs, which is the squared correlation between two constructs, were computed. Table 3 shows the result of means, standard deviations, correlations, and the squared correlation between two constructs. Most shared variances were lower than AVE for each factor (Fornell and Larcker 1981), thus confirming discriminant validity of the constructs. Thus, the results confirmed the convergent and discriminant validity for all variables used in the research model. The CFA results indicated acceptable goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2 = 553.949$, $df = 243$ ($p < 0.01$), $RMR = 0.050$, $RMSEA = 0.070$, $IFI = 0.920$, $TLI = 0.909$, and $CFI = 0.920$. The model fit index indicated that it was appropriate to use all variables for further structural equation model analysis.

Different perceptions of gender discrimination between male and female employees

Prior to identifying the relationships proposed by the hypotheses, this study employed independent sample t-tests to determine whether significant differences existed between male and female employees' perception of wage and training discrimination, and of employment and promotion discrimination to identify differing perceptions of gender discrimination between two groups. The findings of the comparison between male and female employees are reported in Table 4. Gender was statistically significantly different in mean scores of 9 out of 12 items, indicating that female employees perceive more wage and training discrimination and employment and promotion discrimination than do male employees. Specifically, male employees agreed most strongly with statements such as 'male workers are more preferred in professional jobs than females' and 'it is difficult for women workers to transfer to departments that are favorable to promotion', whereas

Table 2 Confirmatory factor analysis

	Variables	Factor loadings	Standardized error	Critical ratio (t-value)	Construct reliability	AVE
LMX	lmx6	.836	.141	10.804	.919	.582
	lmx7	.798	.131	10.460		
	lmx2	.762	.137	10.119		
	lmx3	.762	.137	10.121		
	lmx5	.779	.148	10.282		
Gender discrimination	lmx4	.761	.145	10.111		.521
	lmx1	.625	–	–		
	sd11	.699	.100	10.121	.888	
	sd12	.676	.105	9.821		
	sd6	.711	.078	13.031		
	sd10	.756	.103	10.847		
	sd9	.837	.106	11.807		
	sd5	.674	–	–		
	sd2	.685	.105	9.540	.903	
	sd3	.767	.110	10.429		
Employment and promotion discrimination	sd1	.636	–	–		.565
	sd4	.773	.112	10.488		
	sd7	.825	.122	11.011		
	sd8	.826	.121	11.019		
	scs2	.859	.115	11.667	.901	
Subjective career success	scs4	.719	.081	13.499		.607
	scs3	.809	.110	11.241		
	scs5	.682	–	–		
	scs1	.721	.104	10.266		

Table 3 Means, standard deviations, and correlation coefficients

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3
1 LMX	3.1281	.6822			
2 Wage & training discrimination	2.7395	.8132	-.102 (.010)		
3 Employment & promotion discrimination	3.0619	.8465	-.105 (.011)	.787* (.619)	
4 Subjective career success	2.9226	.7579	.330* (.108)	.021 (.000)	-.068 (.004)

* $p < 0.01$. () = squared multiple correlation.

female employees agreed most strongly with statements such as ‘it is difficult for female workers to be promoted to top executive positions’ and ‘female workers’ promotion opportunities are more unfavorable than males’. Interestingly, both groups were least likely to agree with statements such as ‘male workers are preferred to attend training programs’ and ‘female workers tend to be excluded from training programs’.

Test of hypotheses

Structural equation modeling was conducted to identify the relationships among LMX, gender discrimination and subjective career success. The overall model fit of the structural model was fair: $\chi^2 = 900.256$, d.f. = 245 ($p < 0.01$), GFI = 0.804, PGFI = 0.657, IFI = 0.832, CFI = 0.831, PNFI = 0.695, PCFI = 0.738. The results of SEM are as follows. First, LMX significantly positively influenced subjective career success (coefficient: 0.326, t-value: 4.479, $p < 0.01$), and hypothesis 1 was supported. Second, LMX did not have a significant impact on wage and training discrimination (coefficient: -0.084 , t-value: -0.026), but had a significantly negative influence on employment and promotion discrimination (coefficient: -0.115 , t-value: -1.652 , $p < 0.1$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Third, wage and training discrimination had a significantly positive influence on subjective career success (coefficient: 0.247, t-value: 3.630, $p < 0.01$); however, employment and promotion discrimination had a significantly negative impact on subjective career success (coefficient: -0.227 , t-value: -3.356 , $p < 0.01$). Thus, hypothesis 3 was partially supported.

The results of hypothesis 3 must be interpreted carefully. To better understand the ambiguous results, an invariance test of a structural model was conducted to identify any moderating effects of gender on the relationship between LMX and gender discrimination, between gender discrimination and subjective career success, and between LMX and subjective career success. To verify the moderating effect of gender, chi-square values between a free model and a constrained model were compared. If the difference of chi-square between the two models is higher than 3.84 ($p < 0.05$), it can be interpreted that a significant moderating effect exists. The analysis revealed gender as a significant moderator in the relationship between LMX and subjective career success, indicating that female employees’ perception of LMX is significantly higher than that of male employees.

In addition, even if there exists no significant moderator of gender, it is necessary to explore the relationships between wage and training discrimination and subjective career

Table 4 Mean differences in male and female employees' perception of gender discrimination

	Male (n = 151)	Rank (n = 110)	Female (n = 110)	Rank	t-value	Sig. (2-tailed)
Wage and training discrimination	sd11: Female workers are tended to exclude for training program. sd12: Male workers are asked to attend training program preferentially. sd6: The rate of wage increase for female workers is lower than that of male. sd10: Career development programs for female workers are lack. sd9: Performance assessment is unfavorable for female workers. sd5: Wage of female workers is lower than that of male. sd2: Male workers are more preferred to professional jobs than female.	12 11 9 6 8 10 1	2.68 2.87 2.95 2.98 3.20 3.07 3.23	11 10 9 8 6 7 4	-2.183 -2.896 -3.046 -1.516 -4.660 -4.034 -1.663	.030** .004* .003* .131 .000* .000* .097
Employment and promotion discrimination	sd3: It is difficult for female workers to transfer departments that are favorable to promotion. sd1: It is more difficult for female workers to get a job than male. sd4: Female workers get lower performance assessment than male. sd7: Female workers' promotions are more unfavorable than males'. sd8: It is difficult for female workers to promote top executives.	4 7 5 3	2.88 2.70 2.87 2.93	9 5 2 1	-.481 -4.092 -3.844 -4.692	.631 .000* .000* .000*

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$.

success, and between employment and promotion discrimination and subjective career success for each group. First, wage and training discrimination had a significant positive impact on subjective career success for each group. These results may indicate that when males perceive that female employees experience more wage and training discrimination, they are likely to be more satisfied with their career success. However, in the case of females, their perception that they experience more discrimination in wage and training than males positively influenced their subjective career success. Second, employment and promotion discrimination did not significantly impact subjective career success for males. However, for female employees, employment and promotion discrimination had a significant negative impact on subjective career success. These results may mean that if female employees perceive more employment and promotion discrimination, they are likely to be less satisfied with their career success. In the context of the results of moderating effects, the impacts of gender will be discussed, and managerial implications from the results will be suggested in the discussion section (Table 5).

Discussion and conclusion

Understanding the relationships among LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success can suggest practical solutions for efficient human resource management by hotel managers, and can provide a platform for future research. Identifying employees' perception of LMX, gender discrimination, and subjective career success can help evaluate and diagnose potential and artificial gender discrimination issues in organizations. And it helps hotel managers find ways to resolve those problems, and build a better work environment for employees.

This study verified the impact of LMX on gender discrimination and subjective career success perceived by employees in the Korean hotel industry. This study contributes theoretically by extending integrated relationships among LMX, gender discrimination and subjective career success, going beyond existing studies which examined the relationship between two of these concepts. The findings also point to managerial implications for human resource managers in the hotel industry to foster the relationship between leaders and members, relieve employees' perception of gender discrimination, and improve employees' perceptions of their career success. The results of this study are as follows. First, the results indicated that LMX had a significant positive impact on subjective career success. This result is similar to previous studies which showed that LMX is related positively to subjective career success (Seibert, Kraimer and Liden 2001). Identifying the relationship between LMX and subjective career success can be very productive in assessing current interpersonal relationships between leaders and members, and in developing desirable and constructive relationships for employees' higher subjective career success and organizational performance in the future. Second, LMX had no significant influence on wage and training discrimination; however, it had a significantly negative influence on employment and promotion discrimination. This result is in line with previous studies which showed that positive relationships between leaders and members relieve employees'

Table 5 Invariance tests of the structural model for gender

Paths	Male		Female		Free model $\chi^2(490)$	Constrained model $\chi^2(491)$	$\Delta\chi^2$	Results
	Coefficients	t-values	Coefficients	t-values				
LMX → Wage & training discrimination	-.106	-1.148	-.013	-.124	$\chi^2(490) = 1218.809$	$\chi^2(491) = 1219.379$	$\Delta\chi^2(1) = .57$	NS
LMX → Employment & promotion discrimination	-.113	-1.219	-.091	-.866	$\chi^2(490) = 1218.809$	$\chi^2(491) = 1218.844$	$\Delta\chi^2(1) = .035$	NS
Wage & training discrimination → SCS	.231	2.463**	.192	2.031**	$\chi^2(490) = 1218.809$	$\chi^2(491) = 1218.852$	$\Delta\chi^2(1) = .043$	NS
Employment & promotion discrimination → SCS	-.046	-5.11	-.327	-3.303*	$\chi^2(490) = 1218.809$	$\chi^2(491) = 1221.691$	$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 2.882$	NS
LMX → SCS	.194	2.072**	.471	4.034*	$\chi^2(490) = 1218.809$	$\chi^2(491) = 1223.681$	$\Delta\chi^2(1) = 4.872$	S

* $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$. LMX = leader-member exchange, SCS = subjective career success, NS = not supported, S = supported.

perception of gender discrimination (Dienesch and Liden 1986; Liden and Maslyn 1998). Better relationships between leaders and members can reduce employees' perception of employment and promotion discrimination, leading to an improvement in their subjective career success. Third, wage and training discrimination had a significant positive effect on subjective career success; however, employment and promotion discrimination had a significantly negative effect on subjective career success. This negative finding supports previous research (Gutek, Cohen and Tsui 1996). However, it is necessary to use care in interpreting the result which shows a positive relationship between wage and training discrimination and subjective career success. To clarify the results, additional analysis was conducted after separating the responses of males and females. The analysis showed that female as well as male employees perceive more subjective career success if they feel female employees experience more wage and training discrimination. On the other hand, female employees perceive less subjective career success if they feel more employment and promotion discrimination. It is necessary to understand unique environment of South Korea, which shows the biggest wage gap between males and females among OECD countries. Thus, female employees may accept the wage gap as a systematic problem of Korean society, or they may recognize that this problem is difficult to improve quickly and easily, as shown by Brownell's (1994) study, which indicates that female employees are likely to perceive wage differences as a common phenomenon. Based on this aspect, females are more likely to feel employment and promotion discrimination than wage and training discrimination. The wage difference of South Korea is much bigger than in other OECD countries. In 2014, wage levels for females were 63% of wage levels for males. More specifically, 38.9% of female workers were low wage workers, while only 16.6% of male workers were. Compared to rates in the United States, where 21.7% of males and 29.2% of females are low wage workers, the ratio of women in low-wage positions in South Korea is extremely high (MK news 2015). Additionally, the rate of female employment in South Korea was 55.4% in 2015, which is lower than the average rate of 58.4% in OECD countries (Korea Times 2015), and the 'glass ceiling' index of 28 OECD countries indicated that South Korea had the lowest score, with 25.6 out of 100 points (SEGYE.COM 2015). The results of this study must be understood in this context.

As mentioned, the positive impact of LMX and subjective career success was higher for females than for males, indicating that hotel managers' roles are very important in reducing female employees' perception of gender discrimination. Furthermore, in collectivist cultures like South Korea or China, interpersonal relationships are considered important in the workplace, and have a powerful impact on employees' job attitudes and behaviors. As Iverson (2000) indicates, women tend to more highly value their relationships with colleagues and supervisors, while men more highly value their status in their jobs. Given the characteristics of South Korea culture, in order to reduce gender discrimination, if managers express more consideration and concern for female employees, they could be less likely to perceive gender discrimination. But it is most important for CEOs to create transparent procedures for placement and promotion and to guarantee fair policies. Of course, it is not easy to quickly modify existing work environments in real business sur-

roundings. Nevertheless, hotel managers can make greater effort to reduce female employees' perceptions of gender discrimination through strategies such as guaranteeing equal participation in decision-making processes, evaluating employees impartially, creating open promotion proceedings, and offering personal counseling programs.

According to the result on the gender perception difference, in contrast to previous studies (Wang et al. 2011) that indicated that employees perceive discrimination most in training (a critical component of perceived career success), this study indicates that female employees perceive that they experience more discrimination in promotion, while male employees perceive that female employees experience more discrimination in job placement. Discrimination in training opportunities, on the other hand, was least perceived by both groups. This finding can be interpreted to mean that the South Korean hotel industry should prioritize fair and clear policies of promotion and job placement, because employees perceive less gender discrimination in training than in these areas. As mentioned, the glass ceiling is a serious problem in the workplace. Because our results indicate that males and females may have different perceptions of gender discrimination, hotel managers need to grapple with this issue, and propose and implement practical strategies to reduce gender discrimination considering each organization's culture. If such efforts are made, female employees' perception of career success can be improved through fair promotion systems, etc., thus improving overall organizational performance. If female employees feel less gender discrimination in the workplace, they may feel more satisfied with the quality of their work life, and this satisfaction will lead to higher productivity and more positive outcomes.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study has some limitations and suggests further research. First, the research sample consisted entirely of 5-star and 4-star hotel employees. If employees who work at smaller or independent hotel properties are investigated, the results may be different. Future studies need to investigate various types of hotels so that the generalizability of the results may be improved. Second, the survey location was limited to Seoul, South Korea. The relationship between leaders and members, and employees' perception of gender discrimination in the workplace, may be different in diverse cultures. Further research will be required to examine perceptions in other countries. Third, all information used for the study was self-reported by employees and is therefore influenced by their subjective perceptions. Research needs to be designed to use more objective measurement tools, expand the sample by including supervisors' perspectives, and use more in-depth investigation methods such as interviews to collect more detailed data on female employees' perception of gender discrimination. Lastly, beyond gender discrimination from male and female subordinates, future researchers could study perceptions of the glass ceiling from both male and female perspectives, or conduct a deeper micro-study of gender discrimination in situations such as male bosses with female subordinates or vice versa. Such studies could provide more detailed and practical information to hotel operators.

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