



Women Workforce in the Korean Context

Yeonu Lee*

Department of Hotel and Convention Management, College of Business and Economics, Dong-Eui University, South Korea.

*Email: yeonulee@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

The social participation of women workforce in the labour market is now more prevalent than ever, however the promotion opportunities for women employees are limited compared to men in the Korean context. The article explores the impact of the Confucian tradition on women employees and as a result the traditional value causes difficulties for women employees to gain promotion than men in organisations. Also this article discusses why Korean women need to overcome the “glass ceiling” more compared to other countries. In addition, this article examines the factors which impact women employees to curtail work efficiency in service companies. Lastly, this article brings different actors of human resource managers, trade union representatives and employees together to fully understand the gender relations at workplaces.

Keywords: Women Workforce, Confucianism, Glass Ceiling

JEL Classifications: J82, L83

1. INTRODUCTION

The rate of women’s economic activity is 57.0% in Korea, 66.0% in Japan, 67.1% in the United States of America, and the average rate of the 34 countries is 62.8%, according to the employment outlook (OECD, Employment Outlook, 2015). These figures show that the rate of Korean women’s economic activity remains in a low rank out of 34 countries. The statistical figure indicates that women’s economic activities have been restricted in many ways, which is likely to have been influenced by the idea of a men-dominated society in Korea (Sung, 2003). In addition, the size of the men workforce in Korea is 9,924,551 (60.7%) and the size of the women workforce is 6,430,205 (39.3%), with the total size of the Korean workforce being 16,354,756 in 2013 (National Tax Service, 2015). Clearly, the men workforce is much larger than the women workforce. The rate of economic activity covers both the employed and unemployed population, however the workforce figure only shows people engaged in work. The rate of economic activity covers both employed and unemployed population, however the figure of workforce represents all people engaged in work. Therefore the women workforce is lower in percentage terms than the economic activity rate of women in Korea. In terms of industrial classification, the men workforce is 3,411,043 (34.3%) and women workforce is

1,270,876 (19.8%) in the manufacturing industry, whereas in the food and hotel industry the men workforce is 219,346 (2.2%) and women workforce is 274,294 (4.3%) out of 16,354,756 of the total Korean workforce in 2013 (National Tax Service, 2015). Therefore, the women workforce of the food and hotel industry is more advanced than the manufacturing industry. If we accept the idea of having a higher percentage of women to men workforce in hotel industry, we can expect that maybe women employees are likely to be given more promotion opportunities or the equal promotion opportunities compared to men employees. However, the fact shows that the glass ceiling index for South Korea is at the bottom out of 28 OECD countries so South Korea is the hardest country with the highest glass ceiling index. That is Korean women employees have more social barrier by comparison to the rest of OECD countries (The Economist 2014). The aim of this study is to understand why women employees are less successful than men employees in gaining promotion opportunities in the Korean context. In order to address the question, this study has addressed cultural aspects, in particular, Confucianism which is widespread in the Korean society (Kim and Finch, 2002; Kim and Park, 2003; Sung, 2003) and also has discussed an invisible social barrier of “glass ceiling” for women employees. Additionally, the study has explored factors which influence women service employees to curtail work efficiency in hotel industry.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gender Relations: Culture

Hofstede (1994) stresses that culture has a strong effect on people's behaviour; as such, cultural understanding within companies is crucial, as culture is a core component to the successful performance of companies (Budhwar and Sparaw, 2002a; Budhwar and Sparaw, 2002b). Therefore, it is essential to fully understand the culture of Korea as it leads to certain behaviours. Korea has a distinctive national culture as described by Hofstede: South Korea is a collectivist society, with high power distance, a relatively feminine characteristic, and strong uncertainty avoidance. Hofstede (1991) includes the new dimension of Confucianism, which is later described as "long-term oriented national cultures." In Confucianism "morality and virtue must be reflected in a person's behaviour and actions" and "a virtuous person should be respectful in the manner which he conducts himself, reverent in the service of his lord, care for the common people, and be generous while being just" (Confucius 1979, V.16, cited in Kim and Park, 2000, p. 232). Confucianism has stressed the importance of traditional values to manage "social order, harmony in the family or self-cultivation" with emphasis on "respect authority and elders, loyalty (were transformed into company loyalty) and the importance of diligence for self-cultivation (was changed to working hard for one's workplace)" (Kim and Park, 2003, p. 44). Confucianism is closely related to family relationships and it has highlighted the different role of family members (Kim and Finch, 2002), this reveals that strong Confucian traditions remain and influences gender roles in Korean context (Sung, 2003). For example, women implement child-care and domestic tasks while men carry out economic activity outside the home for their family. Furthermore, Koreans celebrate Korean traditional days such as Thanksgiving day (Chuseok) and Lunar New Year's day. Koreans have conducted memorial service for their ancestors through those ceremonies and this is impacted by Confucianism. Korean women have to spend a lot of time to prepare a variety of specific food for the memorial service for their ancestors to meet Confucianism value. After the ceremonies, Koreans share the food with their family and relatives together so women have to prepare a large amount of food (Kim, 1996). Therefore women have to do a great amount of home tasks for the ceremonies traditionally unlike the western memorial service. This implies that the traditional value has been pushed so that women complete domestic tasks than work outside compared to men. In this respect, Korea has traditionally maintained Confucianism (Hofstede, 1991) therefore Confucianism has dominantly influenced the role of gender, in particular, Confucian traditions have prohibited

women to have a job so women are forced to only take care of all of the household affairs including childcare than men. As a result, women employees have had less opportunity to work outside and also have less opportunity to get a promotion at their workplace by the traditional value. Again Korean society is seen as a men-centred society, and this traditional value supports that it was easier to dismiss women employees, and they were prepared to relinquish their jobs so that more jobs could be made for men (Kim and Finch, 2002).

2.2. A Contrast of Contexts: Gender Gap in Korea and other Countries

Iceland is ranked first as the smallest female inequality country over male across the world (scored 0.8594) whereas South Korea is ranked 117 (scored 0.6403) out of 142 countries investigated with the gender inequality index (World Economic Forum: The Global Gender Gap Report, 2014). This specifies that there is a big gap of gender inequality between men and women in Korea. The global gender gap report includes evaluation items such as economic participation and opportunity (i.e., female labour force participation over male value, female estimated earned income over male value), educational attainment (i.e., female literacy rate over male value, female net secondary enrolment rate over male value) and health and survival (i.e., sex ratio at birth, female healthy life expectancy over male value) and political empowerment (i.e., females with seats in parliament over male value and (i.e., number of years of a female head of state (last 50 years) over male value) (Table 1).

In the case of Iceland, the percentage of "the highest share of women on boards of listed companies" is 67% but in South Korea it is only 12%. The indicator of "females with seats with in parliament over male value" shows Iceland with 66% and South Korea with 19%. In addition Iceland is 74% otherwise South Korea is 51% on the indicator of "the wage equality between women and men for similar work" (World Economic Forum: The Global Gender Gap Report, 2014). In regards to this, Iceland occupies a higher percentage of all the evaluating indicators as opposed to South Korea and this implies that South Korea is one of the lowest-ranking countries on the gender inequality index and female workers have been treated unequally more in the Korean society compared to other countries. Why did South Korea receive the lowest score for the gender inequality index report? In terms of the literacy rate, the ratio of each male and female occupies 99% but South Korea ranked 22 out of 142 countries. Lesotho tops the literacy rate ranking although the literacy rate of male is 66% and of female is 85%. The figure shows that Korean women have a higher literacy rate compared

Table 1: Global rankings, 2014

Country (out of 142 countries)	Overall		Economic participation and opportunity		Educational attainment		Health and survival		Political empowerment	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Iceland	1	0.8594	7	0.8169	1	1.0000	128	0.9654	1	0.6554
Finland	2	0.8453	21	0.7859	1	1.0000	52	0.9789	2	0.6162
Norway	3	0.8374	2	0.8357	1	1.0000	98	0.9695	3	0.5444
Sweden	4	0.8165	15	0.7989	43	0.9974	100	0.9694	5	0.5005
Denmark	5	0.8025	12	0.8053	1	1.0000	65	0.9741	7	0.4306
South Korea	117	0.6403	124	0.5116	103	0.9648	74	0.9730	93	0.1117

Source: World Economic Forum: The Global Gender Gap Report, 2014

to Lesotho women but the reason why Lesotho received a higher score is because the women population is higher than the men population than Korea. That is to say, the report is evaluated using relative valuation than absolute valuation regarding the gender ratio (female over male ratio) so African countries tend to get a higher score compared to South Korea because the female population are relatively higher than the male population. Another reason why Korea received a low score in the rate of entering university is due to its rate of male to female with 111% and 84% respectively. The 111% includes male students on a leave of absence for military service who are also considered as university students so the male percentage is increased and it also influences the low score. Through this, the indicators used for the report are likely to have a limitation to explain the gender inequality index in all the countries so this may be the reason why we can expect different results (i.e., increased the gender inequality index) if the indicators of global gender gap changes. However there is a very interesting survey to support why the Korean gender inequality index is very low and it may not narrow the inequality gap between men and women even though the criteria changes. The total number of executives on boards in listed Korean companies is 4561 and the ratio of women on boards is only 1.9% (Korea Corporate Governance Service 2014). Data from the Korea Corporate Governance Service 2014 Women on Boards survey designates that only 78 companies have more than one female executive out of 694 companies and the maximum number of female executives were only two people in each company.

The total number of women executives is 85 out of 4,561 in 694 companies and this reveals it corresponds to approximately 1.8% out of the total women executives on board. The internal women executives are 17 and outside women executives are 68 out of 85 women executives. In particular, 54 (79.4%) out of 68 executives are daughters of the controlling shareholder’s family investigating the director on women board. This shows that it is very uncommon to become a women executive by going through the normal process of promotion in Korean companies (only 20.6%). Supporting this, Figure 1 shows that the ratio of women on boards from several countries: France remains in first position and the second is Netherlands (17%). The ratio of women boards in South Korea accounts for only 1.9% which points out that the women on boards are relatively low compared to other countries (i.e., UK, and China) (GMI Ratings’ 2013 Women on Boards Survey). Additionally, more recent data confirmed that there were 44% women with a managerial role in Latvia while Korea had just over 10% (ILO Department of Statistics Database, 2016). In particular, about 50% of business in Korea revealed that women who are mid to senior level leave their jobs due to family commitments (McKinsey and Company, 2012). In regards to this, Korean society has not broken the barrier of sexual inequality yet thus women workers cannot get to the top, although they do reach a certain level of job position. Again women employees’ experience in getting to the top remains scarce and therefore South Korea needs to overcome the “glass ceiling” more than other countries.

2.3. Hindrance Factors: Curtail Job Efficiency of Women Employees

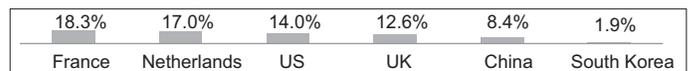
Korean hotels must provide the appropriate legal level of sexual harassment prevention education under the Equal Employment

Opportunity Act. That is to say, strong Korean legislation requires the hotel industry to provide sexual harassment prevention education annually at least once per year in order to reduce the likelihood of sexual harassment. A research was conducted to investigate women employees’ sexual harassment in workplace by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU, 2011) which is an independent union with a strong voice at national-level. The research analysed 1652 questionnaires from women unions members and the results show that 60.6% of women have experienced sexual harassment otherwise 39.4% of women have not experienced sexual harassment in their workplace in the past 2 years. In Table 2, the results for sexual harassment experienced by women have been summarised into 14 different types of sexual harassment. Women employees who have experienced below two types of sexual harassment occupies 31.2% while women who have experienced over three types of sexual harassment is 51.0%, therefore women employees are exposed to different types of sexual harassment in their workplace. In this respect, sexual harassment still happens in workplaces although legal training to prevent sexual harassment is provided.

There is another factor which curtails job efficiency of women employees. In Asian countries such as Hong Kong and China, previous studies proved that employees feel more stressed at work (Shanfa et al., 1998; Siu and Cooper, 1998; Siu et al., 1997) whilst Danes have less reason to feel stressed at work (Schramm-Nielsen, 2000). There is remarkable evidence that an annual average of 314 employees die because of overwork (Ministry of Employment and Labour, 2011). The statistical figure indicates that 1572 employees died from overwork in job-related accidents over a period of 5 years (2006-2010). In this aspect, the level of work-related stress experienced by Korean employees is one of highest of any country in the world.

Employees who work in the hospitality industry encounter customers in a number of diverse services hence they are

Figure 1: The ratio of women boards



Source: GMI Ratings’ 2013 Women on Boards Survey

Table 2: The experience of sexual harassment

Different types of sexual harassment	The number of sexual harassments experienced (%)	Accumulated (%)
1	201 (31.2)	31.2
2	121 (18.8)	50.0
3	91 (14.1)	64.1
4	71 (11.9)	75.2
5	48 (7.5)	82.6
6	30 (4.7)	87.3
7	33 (5.1)	92.4
8	25 (3.9)	96.3
9	11 (1.7)	98.0
10	9 (1.4)	99.4
11	3 (0.5)	99.8
14	1 (0.2)	100.0
Total	644 (100)	

sometimes faced with uncertainty in their job (Kim et al., 2009). The reason why hotel employees are likely to experience stress may be because of customers, unlike those in the manufacturing industry. This is associated with the rhetoric of “the customer is king” and that management predominantly focuses on the customer’s voice and needs (Boyce, 2000). Hence employees are likely to need the patience of job to deal with such customers. In addition, handling the issue of stress is very important because this is related to the notion of “subject to a mass of competing, often contradictory or conflicting demands and expectations from a multiplicity of sources” (Hales and Nightingale, 1986. p. 10). Moreover, most hotel managers also suffer from work-related stress (Brymer et al., 1991). Kim et al. (2009) found that female employees have more negative aspects about role stress and role conflicts in terms of gender in the hotel.

2.4. Organisational Justice

Being able to understand organisational justice allows employees to have a better understanding of what employees think and feel about the organisation such as their willingness (to stay not to leave) (Hom and Griffeth, 1995) and their attitude at work (Greenberg, 1990; Sweeney and McFarlin, 1993); which all influence the employees’ outcome. Organisational justice considers the perception of employees in terms of fair employment conditions (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998), for example this could involve giving organisational rewards such as pay and promotion (Parker and Kohlmeyer, 2005). Marchington and Grugulis (2000) highlighted that Pfeffer’s (1998) study neglected “independent employee voice” and employment involvement was only mentioned using economic efficiency and problem-solving. From this we cannot determine that “employees are active participants in the employment relationship whose frames of reference may differ from those espoused by their managers” (Marchington and Grugulis, 2000. p. 1119).

Organisational justice covers two areas-distributive and procedural justice (Jawahar, 2002; Aryee, et al., 2004; Olkkonen and Lipponen, 2006; Wong, et al., 2006; Lambert, et al., 2007). Distributive justice focuses on evaluating employees’ outcomes through a decision-making system, while procedural justice involves decisions being made which concerns the fairness of the process (Greenberg, 1987). In regards to distributive justice concerning the policies and practices, it is hypothesised that employees perceive distributive justice involves looking at their ratio of organisational input, such as effort, performance, skills, competence and career development opportunities are balanced with those of their peers and colleagues, otherwise an employees’ perspective on procedural justice is hypothesised to be concerned with the fairness of the promotion process which is based on factors such as pay, rewards, promotion and evaluations decided within organisations. This study will view the concept of organisational justice as one of the way of exploring how employees perceive human resource (HR) practices, regarding gender relations at work places.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study examines why women employees are less successful than men in gaining promotion opportunities in the Korean context. To address the question, this study shows the impact of Korean

culture on women gaining less promotion opportunity than men and why Korean women need to overcome the “glass ceiling” more than other countries. Also this study examines factors which impact women service employees to curtail work efficiency in service companies. This study was conducted using mixed methods to deal with the questions. Recently, social science researchers have recognised that using qualitative research, or quantitative research alone, is not desirable to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject being studied (Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). The advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative methods is that the data collected from using both of the methods will provide a greater understanding of the research problems than relying on one type of data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). There is contention that in combining methodologies “it conveys a sense of the rigour of the research and provides guidance to others about what researchers intend to do or have done (Creswell, 2003)” cited in Plano Clark, and Creswell (2008). It can be argued that using these methods enhances the quality of the research, and makes the researcher’s rationale clearer to the reader. Bryman (2006) strongly suggests that using mixed methods has benefits because there is a significant advantage in using both the quantitative and qualitative research, especially when looking at the benefits provided and the means of their combined use in practice. Good social research requires both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to offer a satisfactory investigation (Denscombe, 2008). This rationale encourages HR management studies to adopt both positivist and interpretive paradigms within the same research (Hoque, 2000; Hope, 2004). In other words, researchers do not necessarily have to focus on only one particular view to understand the social world for their research (Bowen, 2003; Massey, 2003). The author has determined to take a pragmatic approach because it is more likely to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the specific research questions in this study. For example in a quantitative approach, a large number of samples from the population can be used to represent the perception of HR managers and employees than a small number of samples from a qualitative method. The qualitative research approach should be used, if the aim of the research needs a comprehensive understanding into the specific social phenomena (Ghauri et al., 1995) of how the sexual harassment curtail work efficiency through the rich explanations of actors. Thus, a qualitative research method and a quantitative research method were taken to examine how the HR practice of “women are less successful in gaining promotion than men” was enacted in the Korean context. Data gathering focused on the employees who have worked at deluxe hotel sector. The sample in this study was taken from four sources. These are firstly, questionnaire surveys from 12, out of 48 deluxe hotels; secondly, interviews with 10 HR managers representing a sub-sample from the 12 hotels and their answers to questionnaires; thirdly, the interviews of 10 trade union representatives were also a sub-sample from the 12 hotels, and lastly, 486 questionnaires were returned out of the 590 that were distributed between five hotels in Seoul and five hotels in Busan.

4. RESULTS

The results from the quantitative and qualitative data outlined above are now presented and discussed.

The T-test is conducted to evaluate the significant difference between organisational justice and gender to understand the employees' opinions and feelings about the organisation and they are summarised in Table 3. The results between "distributive justice" and "procedure justice" variables are statistically significant $P < 0.05$. Compared to the mean value, male employees ($n = 242$) considered the variable of "providing fair opportunity for promotion" and "operating a fair procedure of promotion" more significant than female employees ($n = 244$). The results indicate that male employees are more likely to get a fair promotion opportunity, but also that male employees experienced that their hotels operated a fair procedure of promotion for women employees. The reason behind this may be that women employees have had less promotion opportunities than men employees in work places, therefore women employees are likely to feel less significant compared to men employees.

33.3% of HR managers considered "men are more successful than women in getting promotion" (Table 4). The results imply that 66.7% of hotels are likely to provide equal promotion opportunities irrespective of gender. However the results from qualitative data from HR managers show that 5 out of 10 HR managers pointed out that Korean hotels are still likely to consider gender when making promotion decisions.

"To tell you the truth, there are more male managers compared to female managers... But I haven't really thought about this before and that might be because I am used to this kind of Korean culture having grown up in Korea" (HR manager 9).

In this respect, hotels are likely to give more promotion opportunities to men than women, although Korea is a feminine society according to Hofstede (Hofstede, 1991). The reason why women are likely to get less promotion opportunities than men can be found from the following evidence:

"A hotel must be open 24 h every single day. I mean we can't really close during the important holidays like the Lunar New Year's Day or Korean Thanksgiving Day so employees are told to work during those days too. But on those days, women traditionally work hard to prepare lots of food to celebrate. Therefore, they don't work on traditional days in the hotel. But by doing so, it does impact the employees' performance review and women to get less chance of getting a promotion than men, just from missing those days" (HR manager 7).

Unlike the results from HR managers based on quantitative data, 63.8% of employees feel that 'men are more successful than women in getting a promotion' as summarised in Table 4.

In addition, approximately 47.8% of regular staff feel that men are more successful than women in getting a promotion, compared to 16% of atypical staff from Crosstabs analysis. Of those that responded this way, those who answered "yes" were: Full-time staff (29.2%), operational manager (8.6%), supervisor (6.8%), manager (1.9%) and senior manager (1.2%) (Table 5). As such, it can be concluded that regular staff perceive men as having more success in promotion. It seems that individual employees, especially full-time staff, are more sensitive about promotion opportunities; as full-time staff are in line to receive promotion to management, these results show higher significance than among other positions. Therefore, there exists a conflict between management and employees in relation to promotion: Employees feel that men are more successful than women in gaining promotion opportunities, whereas most HR managers do not support this view (Table 4).

Also Crosstabs analysis is used to understand the employees' feelings of the less opportunity of women promotion in terms of age. 63.8% of employees answered "yes" and 36.2% of employees remarked "no." Of those that responded this way, those who answered "yes" of age group were: Below 20 (3.7%), 26-30 (26.3%), 31-35 (16.5%), 36-40 (9.1%), 41-45 (4.5%), 46 or above (3.7%) (Table 6). Therefore younger employees are likely to have a more critical view about the promotion of gender inequality and against the role of women that is from traditional thought of Confucianism.

Employees who work between 1 and 3 years are more aware that men have more promotion opportunities than women regarding the working period. Approximately 53.8% of employees who have worked in the hotel for over 1 year feel that men are more successful than women in getting a promotion, compared to 10.3% of employees who have worked in the hotel for <1 year (Table 7). 43.6% of employees who have worked in the hotel for over 3 years perceive that men get more promotion opportunities compared to 20.2% of employees who have worked for <3 years in the aspect of years of working in the hotel industry (Table 8). The results show that the longer the employees have worked in the hotel, the more likely employees are to perceive that men are more successful than women in getting a promotion through a large amount of working experience.

The result shows that 59.5% of employees who studied above and including college education feel that men have more promotion opportunities than women, compared to 4.3% of employees who only studied at high school.

The details describe the following for 59.5% of those who answered yes: University, undergraduate (30.5%), College (23.7%), University, postgraduate (5.1%), high school (4.3%),

Table 3: T-test of organisational justice

Organisational justice	Mean		Standard deviation		T-test	P value
	Male (n=242)	Female (n=244)	Male (n=242)	Female (n=244)		
Distributive justice						
Your hotel provides fair opportunity for promotion	2.93	2.66	0.981	0.931	3.111	0.002**
Procedure justice						
Your hotel operates a fair procedure of promotion	3.03	2.78	0.974	0.903	2.937	0.003**

** $P < 0.05$

University, doctoral level (0.2%) (Table 9). This implies that with a higher level of education, employees are likely to perceive that women have less promotion opportunities than men compared to employees who have had lower level of education in the hotel.

By comparing the percentage, employees who have worked the department of food and beverages (18.1%), fitness (16.5%) and back office (14.0%) perceive that women have less promotion opportunities compared to other departments (Table 10). Both managerial staff and operational staff felt that women employees had less promotion opportunities than men employees in the hotels.

33.5% of women and 30.2% of men employees answered “yes” respectively which shows men and women employees both felt that women had less promotion opportunities in the hotel (Table 11).

In a similar vein, the results show that men more significantly perceived that “their hotels provide fair opportunity for promotion” and “operate a fair procedure of promotion” than women employees in relation to organisational justice (Table 3). Again the results prove that in most cases women have had less promotion opportunities than men employees in Korean organisations.

There are obstruction factors for women employees to curtail work efficiency in work places: Sexual harassment and high stress. 3 out of 11 trade unions have handled problems in relation to

sexual harassment from senior managers in the hotel. One union representative comments that “we have continuously asked for education to prevent sexual harassment, and we have conducted a survey for it twice a year. If there is a problem, our trade union will raise objections against the company” (Trade Union Representative 8). In this aspect, trade unions feel that sexual harassment is unfair and will try to prevent it.

“From what I know, I haven’t heard of sexual harassment cases from senior managers in our hotel for a couple of year, which shows that are union have worked hard to stop it from happening. The senior managers are aware that this will be terrible for the union, if this happened” (Trade Union Representative 6).

On the other hand, another trade union representative mentioned “this is a secret... but our union chairman took legal action against the management for sexually harassing women employees. The chairman is not at our hotel anymore” (Trade Union Representative 5). The findings indicate that employees sometimes experience sexual harassment from managerial staff in the hotel industry.

In addition, women employees get stress from customers. For example:

“Hotel management get their employees to sell products by meeting customers in person. Through this process, employees

Table 4: Men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel

HR managers (n=12)		Employees (n=486)	
Yes	No	Yes	No
Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
4 (33.3)	8 (66.7)	310 (63.8)	176 (36.2)

HR: Human resources

Table 5: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion and job position (n=486)

Position	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Part time/internship	16	6.4	22.4
Full time	29.2	16.7	45.9
Operational manager	8.6	6.2	14.8
Supervisor	6.8	3.7	10.5
Manager	1.9	2.1	3.9
Senior manager	1.2	1.2	2.5
General manager	0	0	0
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 6: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and age (n=486)

Age	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Below 20	3.7	1	4.7
26-30	26.3	15.6	42
31-35	16.5	8.2	24.7
36-40	9.1	4.5	13.6
41-45	4.5	5.3	9.9
46 or above	3.7	1.4	5.1
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 7: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and working period (n=486)

Working period in the hotel	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
<1 year	10.3	6.6	16.9
Between 1 and 3	20.4	10.3	30.7
Between 4 and 6	10.7	5.6	16.3
Between 7 and 9	6.2	2.5	8.6
10 or above	16.3	11.3	27.6
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 8: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and years of working in the hotel industry (n=486)

Years of working in the hotel industry	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
<3 year	20.2	12.1	32.3
Between 3 and 5	15.6	6.0	21.6
Between 6 and 10	12.6	7.8	20.4
Between 11 and 15	7.8	5.6	13.4
16 or above	7.6	4.7	12.3
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 9: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and education level (n=486)

Education level	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
High school	4.3	2.9	7.2
College	23.7	11.1	34.8
University, undergraduate	30.5	20.2	50.6
University, post graduate	5.1	1.4	6.6
University, doctoral level	0.2	0.6	0.8
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 10: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and your department (n=486)

Work department	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Front office	8.8	6.0	14.8
Food and Beverages	18.1	11.1	29.2
Kitchen	3.7	3.1	6.8
Back office (Marketing/Finance/Security/HR/Sales support/an operation division of leisure and sports/revenue, reservation department, security)	14.0	7.8	21.8
House keeping	0.8	0.8	1.6
Fitness	16.5	6.6	23.0
Facility	1.4	0.2	1.6
Sauna reception	0.4	0.6	1.0
Total	63.8	36.2	100

Table 11: The relationship between the variable of men more successful than women in gaining promotion in the hotel and gender (n=486)

Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Men	30.2	19.5	49.8
Women	33.5	16.7	50.2
Total	63.8	36.2	100

being more accustomed to an organisational culture as a result of time spent doing compulsory military service. However, women are likely to have some justified complaints for a number of reasons, namely; women are sexually harassed, women receive fewer opportunities for promotion, and women, especially those who are married, have to remain at home and cook on traditional days, instead of working in hotels like men.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Korean society is deeply associated with “gender-role stereotypes” and has a strong tradition of preferring sons to daughters, therefore men have an advantage in family and society over women (Kang and Rowley, 2005. p. 227). Traditionally, the role of a woman is limited to housekeeping, taking care of her family, and supporting her husband as best she can. Rapidly changing circumstances have induced greater participation by women in Korean society (Korean Women’s Development Institute, 2003). Indeed, social participation by women in Korean society is now very common, however the idea of male-domination remains strong. Social customs and attitudes are likely to influence local organisations. For example, Hofstede’s masculinity index revealed that Korea is a relatively feminine society, however the findings of this study show that men are still more likely to be promoted than women due to the cultural importance in Korean society. However, there is another reason why women do not get as many promotions as men, and that is because, traditionally, women must work at home to help celebrate the Korean traditional days and this is associated with the role of women by Confucianism, which is widespread in Korea. It impacts on employee performance reviews; therefore they are likely to lose the promotion opportunity. Again, this study demonstrated that women are more concerned with the feminine role at home in a Korean society. A number of HR managers disagreed with the suggestion that men are favoured in promotion, while employees agreed with it; therefore the findings indicate divergent views between these two groups. HR managers believe that hotel management provide the same promotion opportunities irrespective of gender. If we accept this idea, why do employees feel that men are given more promotion opportunities than women?

Prior to answering this question, this study looks next at gender ratios for various job positions from the results based on employees’ views to explain the position of the women workforce in the hotel industry, and finally the study debates the reasons

are more likely to get stressed from their customers. In particular, women service employees experience a lot of stress in the organisation, because they are unable to avoid talking to difficult rude customers who speak informally and irrationally toward them, with little help from their colleagues” (HR manager 1).

“Women service employees may often feel extremely insulted by rude male customers” (HR manager 6).

Surprisingly, the results may show why women have less promotion opportunities: Women have more complaints in the organisation than men and a reason put forward to explain this is that most men are accustomed to the requirements of organisations through military service in Korea.

“It is compulsory for men to do their military service in Korea. So they learn to adapt and learn in a well-managed organisation before they start working in a company. So they are used to this kind of environment, but with women they haven’t had this kind of experience and so they have more of a tendency to complain even though it’s a really small thing. But men don’t complain like the women because they know that a small thing is not worth complaining about. I am not criticising women employees, but I’m just saying that they need to have a more rational reason for their complaints” (HR manager 2).

In this aspect, the Korean military service is likely to help men adapt to work in organisations while women are likely to find it difficult to be assimilated into the organisational culture. Additionally, there are obstruction factors for women employees to curtail work efficiency in work places: Sexual harassment and high stress. The findings show that women service employees are likely to increase the stress index from those situations, and this is likely to result in decreased job efficiency of women employees in hotels. HR managers indicate that women complain more about the organisation than men, which is typically attributed to men

behind fewer promotion opportunities for women employees. The sample of data in this study reflects the gender split of the labour market in this area: Empirical data from HR managers shows “a gender ratio of 50:50 in the hotel industry” (Trade Union Representative 9). Also quantitative data from all levels of employees supports that the gender ratio is almost the same between men and women employees (Table 3). In this respect, the size of the women workforce in the hotel industry is large compared to the manufacturing industry. Thus, the hotel industry is more advanced in terms of its women workforce. The gender ratio for various job positions based on employees’ responses to the questionnaire in this study is summarised in Table 12.

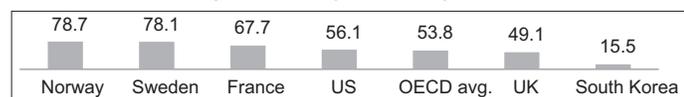
Women occupy a low number of mid-level managerial positions. Men supervisors are twice the number of their women counterparts; men managers are approximately three times the number of women managers, and there are no women senior managers.

The figures show that men managers occupy a dominant position within the hotel industry. That is, Korean women employees are required to overcome the barrier which is referred to as the “glass ceiling, an “unseen, yet unbreakable barrier that keeps minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements” (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995. p. 4). It implies that there exists an invisible social barrier above women and minorities caused by discrimination in the labour market. Women employees especially face difficulties and limitations in the workplace and find it difficult to gain promotions. The “glass ceiling” prevents women from reaching top positions in an organisation (Jellal et al., 2008). There is a very remarkable survey on evaluating glass ceiling index for 28 OECD countries to compare which countries show a clearer social barrier (The Economist 2014). The evaluation factors are made up of higher education, labour-force participation, pay, child-care costs, maternity rights, business-school applications and representation in senior jobs (The perfect score is 100 and the score lower than this indicates the barrier is high for women). The following shows the order of score of glass ceiling index:

Table 12: Employed women by the hotel companies (n=486)

Position	Men (%)	Women (%)	Total (%)
Part time/internship	7.4	15	22.4
Full time	21.6	24.3	45.9
Operational manager	8.4	6.4	14.8
Supervisor	7	3.5	10.5
Manager	2.9	1	3.9
Senior manager	2.5	0	2.5
General manager	0	0	0
Total	49.8	50.2	100

Figure 2: The glass-ceiling index



Sources: OECD; Catalyst; European Commission; GMI ratings; Graduate Management Admission Council; Iner-parliamentary Union; The Economist, 2014

Norway (78.7), Sweden (78.1), France (67.7), US (56.1), UK (49.1) and South Korea (15.5) (Its average score is 53.8) (Figure 2). Surprisingly, the glass ceiling index of South Korea is at the bottom so South Korea is the country with the biggest glass ceiling among OECD countries: Fewer women there have jobs, with a small number of women as senior managers or board members and pay gaps are large in South Korea, this shows that South Korea likely has a long way to go. In addition previous studies of vertical and horizontal gender discrimination are observed in the hotel industry in the UK (Purcell, 1996), and in Hong Kong (Keung and Pine, 2000). The common results from these studies show that general manager positions are male-dominated and remains strong, whilst women employees mainly work at housekeeping and on reception and men employees work in the kitchen and bar. Therefore, women employees find it very difficult to break the glass ceiling in Asian countries. In the Hong Kong hotel industry, there are a higher proportion of men to women managers and this is associated with the notion “the cost of a career to women in terms of their family lives is high” (Ng and Pine, 2003. p. 98). Again, this may show that it is very difficult to break the glass ceiling for women employees in Asian countries.

Why are management likely to be reluctant to give opportunities for promotion to women? Jellal et al. (2008. p. 3234) suggest that this is associated with “uncertainty” that “women are likely to have more frequently interrupted careers and they may choose to quit the labour force either to spend time with children or to care for elderly parents” in a competitive labour market model. For example, over 50% of Korean women in the workforce left their jobs because of family commitments and more than quarter due to childcare (OECD, 2014). Hotel management are likely to have preconceptions about this “uncertainty” and, in practice, some women employees are likely to experience conflict between their work and family responsibilities on Korean traditional days (i.e., Lunar New Year’s day and Korean thanks giving days). Hotel management are likely to have preconceptions about this “uncertainty” and, in practice, some women employees are likely to experience conflict between their work and family responsibilities on Korean traditional days (i.e., Lunar New Year’s day and Korean thanks giving days). Traditionally this is closely associated with Confucianism which focuses on the role of women at home. In addition, hotels operate 365 days a year, therefore the women who work at home on traditional days are less likely to get good marks on performance reviews. Thus, the “glass ceiling” is evidently in effect, and women see fewer chances of promotion than men in Korea. The study found that sexual harassment and getting stress from managers and rude customers for women employees are associated with curtailing work efficiency. Notably, the Korean government provides sexual harassment prevention training as a legal requirement, but there is still considerable evidence found which show that sexual harassment from senior management is still happening in the Korean hotel industry. The reasons for this are expressed by, Gilbert et al. (1998. p. 49) described that “young women are less confident when dealing with people in authority, and feel less important than any other group of employees in the work place.” Hence sexual harassment is directly related to high turnover, poor working relationships and economic costs, which are associated with tangible financial costs through higher

employee turnover and non-tangible costs of human suffering as a result of sexual harassment (Gilbert et al. 1998). By systematically addressing the issue of sexual harassment, hotel management can protect employees and create better productivity and effectiveness in an organisation (Ibid).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Korean women employees are required to overcome the barrier which is referred to as the “glass ceiling” and “tensions which push women into disadvantageous positions” (Cooke, 2001. p. 338). Several earlier studies have highlighted the considerable barriers of women’s employment which are specifically associated with gender (Brownell, 1994; Crafts and Thompson, 1997; Knutson and Schmidgall, 1999; Cooke, 2001; Ng and Pine, 2003; Jung and Choi, 2004). The reason why women employees have fewer promotional opportunities than men employees in Korea is related to a notion of Confucian traditions which strongly emphasise gender roles (Sung, 2003). This implies that Korean society is a men-centred society and therefore such traditional values (i.e., child-care and husband support at home) pushes women into the domestic arena. Thus Confucianism provides outstanding explanatory power (Kim and Park, 2000) in helping to fully understand the pronounced role of gender and gender relations in Korea. In work, women could be dismissed more easily than their men colleagues, and it is assumed women want to put family commitments before work, so that men employment could be preserved (Kim and Finch, 2002). Also women employees are likely to be heavily stressed from senior managers and rude customers, making work much more difficult for them and as a result her work capability is likely to decrease due to high stress. Additionally, the research found that female service employees had experienced sexual harassment from senior managers, which is codified and outlawed by Korean legislation. In order to reduce sexual harassment, the government provides more regular training opportunities for managers. Hofstede (1991) suggests that there is a slow gradual change in culture, but research findings demonstrate that there have been rapid changes in certain aspects of culture, the women workforce find fewer promotion opportunities unfair and are unhappy with the ongoing sexual harassment from senior managers and high stress situations from managers and ill-mannered customers. Younger people are more critical and judgmental with these issues than older people. This might be because younger people are used to modern technology like smartphones and using the internet than the older generation, and so they are able to compare the different gender relations at work places and the distinctive “glass ceiling” in a specific context. Furthermore, this may be linked to the change in attitudes of younger generation who are more open to western ideas and practices.

REFERENCES

- Aryee, S., Chen, Z.X., Budhwar, P.S. (2004), Exchange fairness and employee performance: An examination of the relationship between organisational politics and procedural justice. *Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 94, 1-14.
- Bowen, K.A. (2003), An argument for integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods to strengthen internal validity. Available from: <http://www.trochim.human.cornell.edu/gallery/hass691.htm>.
- Boyce, G. (2000), Valuing customers and loyalty: The rhetoric of customer focus versus the reality of alienation and exclusion of (devalued) customers. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 11, 649-689.
- Brownell, J. (1994), Women in hospitality management: General managers perceptions of factors related to career development. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 13(2), 101-117.
- Bryman, A. (2006), Integrating quantitative and qualitative research: How is it done? *Qualitative Research*, 6(1), 97-113.
- Brymer, R.A., Perrewé, P.L., Johns, T.R. (1991), Managerial job stress in the hotel industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 10(1), 47-58.
- Budhwar, P.S., Sparaw, P.R. (2002a), An integrative framework for understanding cross-national human resource management practice. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12(3), 377-403.
- Budhwar, P.S., Sparaw, P.R. (2002b), Strategic HRM through the cultural looking glass: Mapping the cognition of British and Indian managers. *Organisational Studies*, 23(4), 599-638.
- Cooke, F.L. (2001), Manpower restructuring in the state-owned railway industry of China: The role of the state in human resource strategy. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(5), 904-924.
- Crafts, D.D., Thompson, L.M. (1997), Managers perceptions of career advancement obstacles for women managers in the food service industry. *Journal of College and University Food Service*, (1/2), 41-56.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L. (2007), *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Denscombe, M. (2008), Communities of practice, a research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 2(3), 270-283.
- Federal Glass Ceiling Commission. (1995), *Solid Investment: Making Full Use of the Nation’s Human Capital*, U.S. Department of Labour. Washington, DC: Federal Glass Ceiling Commission.
- Folger, R., Cropanzano, R. (1998), *Organisational Justice and Human Resource Management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ghuri, P., Gronhaug, K., Kristianslund, I. (1995), *Research methods in business studies: A Practical Guide*, Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall.
- Gilbert, D., Guerrier, Y., Guy, J. (1998), Sexual harassment issues in the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 10(2), 48-53.
- GMI Ratings’ 2013 Women on Boards Survey. (2013). Available from: http://www.fortefoundation.org/site/DocServer/GMIRatings_WOB_042013.pdf?docID=19201.
- Greenberg, J. (1987), A taxonomy of organizational justice theories. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, 9-22.
- Greenberg, J. (1990), Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management*, 16, 399-432.
- Hales, C., Nightingale, M. (1986), What are unit managers supposed to do? *Inter-national Journal of Hospitality Management*, 5(1), 3-11.
- Hofstede, G. (1991), *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. London: McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, G. (1994), The business of international business is culture. *International Business Review*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Hom, P.W., Griffeth, R.W. (1995), *Employee Turnover*. Cincinnati: South-Western.
- Hope, C.A. (2004), The impact of national culture on the transfer of “best practice operations management” in hotels in St. Lucia. *Tourism Management*, 25, 45-59.
- Hoque, K. (2000), *Human Resource Management in the Hotel Industry*.

- Strategy, Innovation and Performance. London: Routledge.
- ILO Department of Statistics Database, 2016; OECD Online Employment Database. (2016). Available from: <https://www.oecd.org/daf/ca/OECD-Women-Leadership-2016-Report.pdf>.
- Jawahar, I.M. (2002), A model of organisational justice and workplace aggression. *Journal of Management*, 28(6), 811-834.
- Jellal, M., Nordman, C.J., Wolff, F.C. (2008), Evidence on the glass ceiling effect in France using matched worker-firm data. *Applied Economics*, 40, 3233-3250.
- Johnson, R.B., Onwuegbuzie, A.J., Turner, L.A. (2007), Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133.
- Jung, J., Choi, K. (2004), Gender wage differentials and discrimination in Korea: Comparison by knowledge intensity of industries. *International Economics Journal*, 18, 561-579.
- Kang, Y., Rowley, C. (2005), Women in management in South Korea: Advancement or retrenchment? *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 11, 213-232.
- KCTU, (Korean Confederation of Trade Unions)'s Research Women Employees' Sexual Harassment in Workplace. (2011). Available from: <http://www.kpil.org/opboard/down.php?code=actionDataan&number=116&seq=1>.
- Keung, S.W.C., Pine, R. (2000), Changes in hotel industry recruitment as reflected by content analysis of newspaper advertisements. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 5(2), 57-69.
- Kim, A.E., Park, G. (2003), Nationalism, confucianism, work ethic and industrialization in South Korea. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 33(1), 37-49.
- Kim, A.R. (1996), *Women Struggling for A New Life: The Role of Religion in the Cultural Passage from Korea to America*. USA: State University of New York Press.
- Kim, B.P., Murrmann, S.K., Lee, G. (2009), Moderating effects of gender and organizational level between role stress and job satisfaction among hotel employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28, 612-619.
- Kim, S., Finch, J. (2002), Confucian patriarchy reexamined: Korean families and the IMF economic crisis. *The Good Society*, 11(3), 43-49.
- Kim, U., Park, Y. (2000), Confucianism and family values. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 3(2), 229-249.
- Knutson, B.J., Schmidgall, R.S. (1999), Dimensions of the glass ceiling in the hospitality industry. *The Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 40(6), 64-75.
- Korea Corporate Governance Service. (2014). Available from: <http://www.cgs.or.kr/CGSDownload/eBook/REV/C201409005.pdf>.
- Korean Women's Development Institute. (2003), *Statistical Yearbook on Women*. Seoul: Korean Women's Development Institute.
- Lambert, E.G., Hogan, N.L., Griffin, M.L. (2007), The impact of distributive and procedural justice on correctional staff job stress, job satisfaction, and work behaviours. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 35, 644-656.
- Marchington, M., Grugulis, I. (2000), 'Best practice' human resource management: Perfect opportunity or dangerous illusion? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(6), 1104-1124.
- Massey, A. (2003), Methodological triangulation. Available from: <http://www.freeyourvoice.co.uk/htm/triangulation3.htm>.
- McKinsey and Company. (2012), *Women Matter: An Asian Perspective*. New York: McKinsey.
- Ministry of Employment and Labour. (2011). Available from: <http://www.moel.go.kr/newsearch/search.jsp?startno=0&range=T&andquery=%B0%FA%B7%CE%BB%E7>.
- National Tax Service: The ratio of Korean Workforce. (2015). Available from: http://www.search.nts.go.kr/RSA/front_2012/Search.jsp?menu=%C5%EB%C7%D5%B0%CB%BB%F6&andqt=%B1%B9%BC%BC%C5%EB%B0%E8%B7%CE+%BA%BB+%BF%A9%BC%BA%C0%C7+%B0%E6%C1%A6%C8%B0%B5%BF.
- Ng, C.W., Pine, R. (2003), Women and men in hotel management in Hong Kong: Perceptions of gender and career development issues. *Hospitality Management*, 22, 85-102.
- OECD Employment Outlook. (2015). Available from: <http://www.ifuturo.org/documentacion/Employment%20outlook%202015.pdf>.
- OECD. (2014), *OECD Economic Surveys: Korea*. Paris: OECD Publishing. DOI: 10.1787/eco_surveys-kor-2014-en.
- Oikkonen, M.E., Lipponen, J. (2006), Relationships between organisational justice, identification with organisation and work unit, and group related outcomes. *Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, 100, 202-215.
- Parker, R.J., Kohlmeyer, J.M. (2005), Organisational justice and turnover in public accounting firms: A research note. *Accounting, Organisations and Society*, 30, 357-369.
- Pfeffer, J. (1998), *The Human Equation*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Plano Clark, V.L. and Creswell, J.W. (2008), *The Mixed Methods Reader*. London: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Purcell, K. (1996), The relationship between career and job opportunities: Women's employment in the hospitality industry as a microcosm of women's employment. *Women in Management Review*, 11(5), 17-24.
- Schramm-Nielsen, J. (2000), How to interpret uncertainty avoidance scores: A comparative study of Danish and French firms. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 7(4), 3-11.
- Shanfa, Y., Sparks, K., Coopere, C.L. (1998), Occupational stress in workers and managers in steelworks in China. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 5, 237-245.
- Siu, O.L., Cooper, C.L. (1998), A study of occupational stress, job satisfaction and quitting intention in Hong Kong firms: The role of locus of control and organizational commitment. *Stress Medicine*, 14, 55-66.
- Siu, O.L., Cooper, C.L., Donald, I. (1997), Occupational stress, job satisfaction, and mental health among employees of an acquired TV company in Hong Kong. *Stress Medicine*, 13, 99-107.
- Sung, S. (2003), Women reconciling paid and unpaid work in a confucian welfare state: The case of South Korea. *Social Policy and Administration*, 37(4), 342-360.
- Sweeney, P.D., McFarlin, D.B. (1993), Workers' evaluations of the "Ends" and the "Means": An examination of four models of distributive and procedural justice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process*, 55, 23-40.
- Tashakkori, A., Creswell, J.W. (2007), Exploring the nature of research questions in mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Research*, 1(3), 207-211.
- The Economist: The Glass-ceiling Index. (2014). Available from: <http://www.economist.com/news/business/21598669-bestand-worstplaces-be-working-woman-glass-ceiling-index>.
- Wong, Y.T., Ngo, H.Y., Wong, C.S. (2006), Perceived organisational justice, trust, and OCB: A study of Chinese workers in joint ventures and state-owned enterprises. *Journal of World Business*, 41, 344-355.
- World Economic Forum: The Global Gender Gap Report. (2014). Available from: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf.