



Work-Parenting Experience and Marital Satisfaction of Dual-Earner Couples in Korea: A Dyadic Analysis



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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the actor and partner effects of the relationships between work-parenting experiences and marital satisfaction among dual-earner couples in South Korea. Using 8th wave data of the Panel Study on Korea Children, we analyzed 355 husband-wife pairs. The results of Actor-Partner Interdependence Model showed that husbands' work-parenting strains had not only an actor effect on his marital satisfaction but also a partner effect on wives' marital satisfaction. Wives' work-parenting experiences had only an actor effect on her own marital satisfaction, and the effect of work-parenting gains was stronger than the effect of strains.

Aims

To examine whether husbands' and wives' work-parenting experiences of gains and strains are associated with their own marital satisfaction, and cross over to affect their partner's marital satisfaction.

Background

- According to previous studies, marital satisfaction was higher in the early stage of marriage but it was lower during childrearing years due to heavy burden of child care, increased again in the old age when burden of child care as well as competition in work decreased (Kim, 2009; Rollins & Cannon, 1974).
- In Korea, the conflict between work and child care for dual-income couples is overloaded when children enter elementary school due to care gaps caused by shorter class hours compared to kindergartens or daycare centers. (Kim, 2018).
We assumed that this conflict can be linked to lower marital satisfaction for the dual-income couples when their child enters elementary school.
- Prior research found that work-family gains and work-family strains crosses and that can be experienced by individuals at the same time (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006), yet it is hard to find a study on marital satisfaction that considers both work-family gains and work-family strains at the same time.
- Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002), which focuses on individuals' experienced gains and strains of resources (e.g., energy and time), is a useful theory that conceptualizes how work-family conflict can impede marital functioning by resources loss, and how work-family enrichment can benefit marital life by resources gain (Hakanen, Peeters, & Perhoniemi, 2011; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Data

- The Panel Study on Korean Children (conducted by Korea Institute of Childcare and Education [KICCE], 2013-2014)
- Study sample: 355 dual-earner couples with a 7-year-old child (transitioning to elementary school, 168 boys and 187 girls)
 - Husbands aged 40.37 (SD=4.04); *bachelor's or graduate degree* (54.1%), *finished high school* (20.3%)
 - Wives aged 38.04 (SD=3.53); *bachelor's or graduate degree* (51.0%), *finished high school* (22.0%)

Results

- We examined the actor-partner interdependence model (APIM) and it was appropriate for the data.
- In terms of WP gains, only wives' WP gains had an **actor effect** on her MS ($\beta = .127, p < .01$).
- Husbands' WP strains had not only an **actor effect** on his MS ($\beta = -.237, p < .001$) but also a **partner effect** on wives' MS ($\beta = -.145, p < .01$). Wives' WP strains had an only **actor effect** on her MS ($\beta = -.095, p < .05$).
- The results of comparing the effect sizes¹ showed that the effect of husbands' WP strains was stronger than the effect of husbands' WP gains on his MS.
- On the other hands, the effect of wives' WP gains was stronger than the effect of wives' WP strains on her MS.

¹ $\chi^2(df = 487, N = 355) = 849.662, RMSEA = .046, CFI = .946, TLI = .947$

² To compare the effect sizes relatively between WP gains and WP strains, we created the constrained models; H_{gains} = H_{strains}, W_{gains} = W_{strains}.

Key Variables

- Work-Parenting (WP) strains and gains
 - Marshall & Barnett (1993), 9 items (range 1-5)
- Marital satisfaction (MS)
 - Chung (2004), 4 items (range 1-4)
- Control variables: age, years of education, average monthly household income, gender of child, MS of husband and wife of previous year (lagged variables)

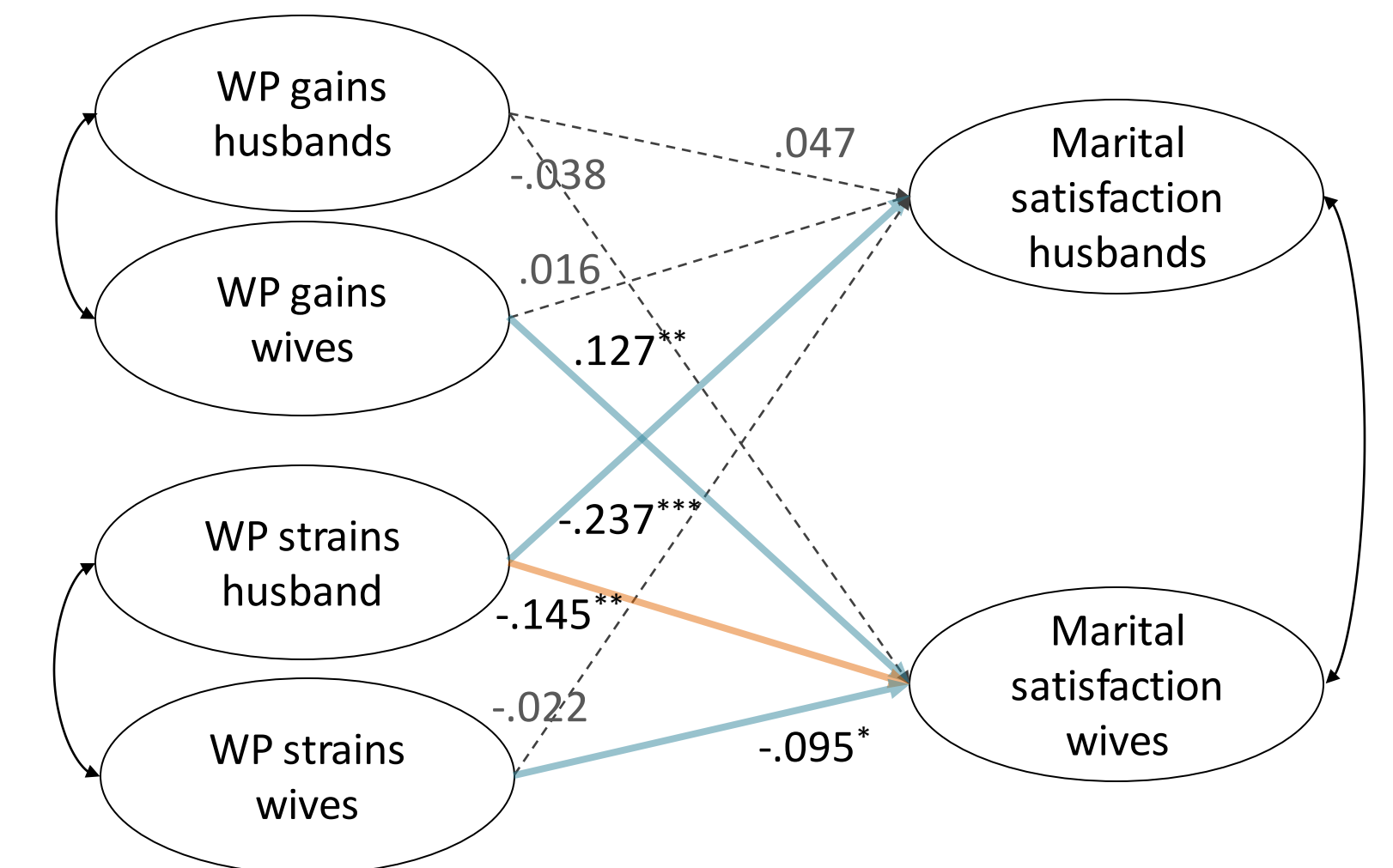


Figure 1. The Actor-Partner Interdependence Model. Each coefficient shown in the figure represents a standardized coefficient. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion

- The Korean government supports the working mothers mainly through leave policies. Based on the results, it is necessary to support the working mothers use their ability in the work-domain in order to maximize the positive synergy from work-parenting.
- Our findings imply that the parent-friendly culture in workplaces is needed for fathers' marital satisfaction as well as mothers'.
- A strength of this study is that we simultaneously assessed how dual-earner couples experience WP in positive and negative ways.