

Labour Reform in Korea from Gender Perspectives

Changes in the Structure of the Korean Women's Labor Market since 2000

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This study explores the structural change of the Korean women's labor market from the long-term perspective of about 20 years after 2000. During Korea's rapid industrialization, women entered the labor market in earnest, and through the currency crisis in 1997 and the financial crisis in 2008, the labor market continued to grow quantitatively. However, it was confirmed that the quality level of the labor market remained weak.

In terms of quantity, since 2000, there has been a change in personnel composition due to the rapid advancement of education, and the employment rate of women aged 25 to 39, the core age group, has increased rapidly. It is also because changes such as the spread of the work life balance system and the increase in women's desire to maintain a career in the profession were reflected in the women's labor market. As a result, career breaks in women were reduced. In addition, the more recent, the more female employees are distributed in various industries, and the health and social welfare industries have increased significantly, centering on professionals and office workers. However, job separation is still severe. In other words, women's traditional concentration in wholesale and retail, food and lodging, education, health and welfare, and manufacturing industries continues as of 2019.

In terms of quality, the proportion of women is high among non-regular workers who are unstable and vulnerable to institutional protection, and non-regular workers are expanding mainly among the youth and the elderly. In addition, the proportion of female irregular workers was very high in all industries. However, the number of female low-wage workers significantly decreased, and the gender wage gap narrowed. However, structural problems such as the high gender wage gap remain a challenge to be solved.

A Critical Review of the Moon Jae-in Administration's Labor Reform from a Gender Perspective

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The Moon Jae-in administration has undertaken labor reform in order to improve the quality of jobs. This article aims to evaluate the achievements and limitations of the Moon Jae-in administration's labor reform from a gender perspective. First, as a result of converting non-regular workers to regular ones in the public sector, the conversion rate was higher for women

than for men, reflecting the over-representation of irregular female workers in the public sector. However, the converted often became employed by newly established subsidiaries, with room for job instability. Moreover, substantial part of female workers in social service jobs were excluded from the conversion. Second, the conservatives' rationale that the increase in the minimum wage will benefit middle-class male workers rather than the minimum wage workers given the wage system, has resulted in female workers continuing to remain as low-wage workers whose wages are solely based on hours worked without additional allowances or bonuses. Third, the Moon Jae-in government's working hours policy focuses on long-hour male workers, ignoring the ever-growing short-hour female workers. Fourth, female employment policy of the Moon Jae-in administration has a clear distinction from the previous administration in terms of the goal of promoting job quality and of reducing gender discrimination. However, the government needs to pay more attention to gendered aspects of the dual structure of the labor market, and reform the overall social and economic system to strengthen social responsibility of care work.

<p>Rethinking Gender Agenda in the Course of an Inclusive State : Women's Social Rights and Welfare Reform in South Korea</p> <p style="text-align: right;">HWANG Jungmee</p>

The Moon Jae-In administration emphasizes the vision of building an "Inclusive state" which will pave a new way for expanded safety-net and social services for all citizens by breaking away from the legacy of the minimalist social policy during the developmental era. While the inclusive social policy can provide positive supports for women's social rights, it should be noted that the scale of welfare is not always proportional to gender equality, and vice versa. The article examines the recently announced social security plan and the vision of an inclusive state, and analyzes how gender equality and women's social rights are being addressed in it. First, policy objectives related to gender equality such as expanding women's employment and work-life balance are recognized not as an integrating principle to transform gendered social structure but as specific subprograms only applied to women. Second, the Moon Jae-in administration's welfare reform is considerably depending on the social investment strategy to cope with social reproduction crisis due to low fertility rate and rapidly aging population. However, it is still controversial whether the social investment approach is compatible with women's social rights and gender equality. If women's welfare rights are designed as a compensation for childbirth and child rearing role, the social investment strategy could reintroduce the criteria for distinguishing deserving women for social rights from those who are not. In order for welfare reform toward an inclusive state to be promoted in line with women's social rights, gender equality should be reconsidered as an integral principle for welfare regime rather than a partial factor.