Differences of the Alternative Production in the Work-Family Multiple Role Conflict of South Korean Female Workers
According to the Psychological Distance: Based on the Construal Level Theory (CLT)

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Introduction

Increasing of women’s external activities makes their work-family multiple role conflicts, which cause career discontinuity and psychological burden on women. Therefore, it is important to understand women’s experience in the multiple role conflicts and effective coping strategies. Thus, the current study sought to verify the effect of psychological distance adjustment in activating flexible and resilient thinking in work-family role conflict situations of South Korean Female Workers.

Method

This research studies the effect of psychological distance as a strategy of boosting resilient and flexible thinking. For that, Construal Level Theory (CLT) has been applied to the experiment design using scenarios as stimulus. Experiments were conducted in a 1:1 situation between the researcher and a participant. The scenarios used in the experiment are developed by Yi (2013) based on the Construal Level Theory (Trope & Liberman, 2010). The stimulus scenario was made into two different versions after adjusting the psychological distance (distant or close) in terms of four dimensions (temporal, spatial, hypothetical, and social distance). Thirty five female workers participated in the experiment, divided into two groups: the psychologically distant group (18) and the psychologically close group (17). Three counseling specialists with doctoral degrees evaluated the responses of participants with criteria of the degree of flow, flexibility and coping styles. The qualitatively evaluated results were analyzed statistically as well.

Results

The results of the study are as follows (A: psychologically distant group, B: psychologically close group).

The psychologically distant group was superior in fluency and flexibility in producing alternatives. In terms of the coping style tendencies in alternatives, the psychologically distant group had a higher response rate for problem-centered coping strategies and lower rate for maladaptive coping strategies than the psychologically close group.

Discussion

The findings of the study are significant for the following reasons. First, the current study sought to analyze the multiple role conflict situations of female workers in South Korea from the cognitive perspective. In particular, the differences in alternative solutions of working women in work-family role conflict situation was confirmed through a variable called psychological distance adjustment. The study had also conceptualized alternative solution as ‘diverse perspectives and solution seeking on the problem situation,’ and its difference was evaluated through assessing the fluency and flexibility in producing alternatives. Second, the study explored female workers’ coping strategies in order to provide information on married female employees with jobs. Such effort enhances the generalization and applicability of current findings. Lastly, by proving an example on intervention strategy for conflict situations that had been relatively understudied in the field of career counseling, this study has expanded the understandings on counseling for multiple role conflict and paved the way for research. In other words, implications from the study can be found in that it has increased the understanding on response styles and provides relevant information for counseling female employees. Several limitations of this study are as follows. First, data collection for the study was done through an artificial experimental situation through scenario stimulus, and does not fully reflect the unique individual experiences of working moms. Second, the sample size was small due to the difficulty of conducting one-on-one experiments on working women. Finally, as the work-family multiple role conflict of working mothers is a complex issue that stems from both social and cultural contexts, a careful consideration of both aspects must be made in counseling.

| Group | Number | Total | Mean | SD | df | t   |
|-------|--------|-------|------|----|----|-----|
| A     | 18     | 275   | 13.75| 1.23| 33 | 13.25*** |
| B     | 17     | 148   | 7.00 | 2.12|    |     |

* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

| Group | Number | Mean | SD | df | t   |
|-------|--------|------|----|----|-----|
| A     | 18     | 5.43 | 0.97| 33 | 6.21*** |
| B     | 17     | 3.02 | 1.03|    |     |

* p<.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001

| Group | Problem centered | Emotion centered | Maladaptive |
|-------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| A     | 210 (76.36)      | 28 (10.18)       | 37 (13.45)  |
| B     | 105 (70.95)      | 9 (6.10)         | 34 (22.97)  |

※ numbers of the emergence in the idea