

YOUNGER GENERATION WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS WITH SUPERVISORS IN SOUTH KOREA

by

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(Under the Direction of Roger B. Hill & John W. Schell)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to (a) document interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by South Korean younger generation (people born after 1976) white-collar workers, (b) investigate personal impacts on younger generation white-collar workers, and (c) explore coping strategies that younger generation white-collar workers used when experiencing interpersonal conflict. Participants in this qualitative study were selected using criterion-based sampling methods. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis was completed using the original Korean transcriptions and selected sentences were translated into English. Data analysis revealed three themes with associated categories. First, younger generation white-collar workers' conflicts were divided into three dimensions: (a) supervisor's personal problems, such as ineffective communication, abusive supervision, and professional incompetence, (b) problems in the work process, such as the absence of job autonomy, unfairness in work assignment, and quantity and result-centered performance appraisal, and (c) social/cultural factors, such as hierarchy, authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism. Second, the impact of conflict on younger generation white-collar workers consisted of the following aspects: (a) psychological and emotional distress, (b) decreased work efficiency, and

(c) deterioration of personal relationships. Third, younger generation white-collar workers' coping strategies could be divided into two categories: (a) aversive attitudes and behaviors, and (b) reluctant adaptation. Three conclusions emerged from the findings. First, in South Korea, interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships had multiple causal dimensions. Second, conflicts negatively influenced South Korean younger generation white-collar workers' personal and work lives. Third, younger generation white-collar workers had nonconstructive, aversive attitudes toward the conflicts within the South Korean social contexts. In short, younger generation white-collar workers experienced conflicts with supervisors in South Korean workplaces that had diverse causes. It was also observed that these conflicts had negative impacts on the work and quality of life for younger generation white-collar workers did.

INDEX WORDS: Younger Generation, White-collar Worker, Supervisor-Subordinate Relationship, Interpersonal Conflict, Workplace Conflict, Phenomenology, Personal Impact, Aversive Coping, Collectivism, Confucianism, South Korean Workers, Social and Cultural Context in South Korea

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

According to Ye (2009), younger generation workers, the so-called *generation-Y*, make up 23.8% of the working population in South Korea. In 1993, the concept of *generation Y* initially appeared in an *Ad Age* magazine editorial to describe the new generation of that era in the United States. It included those who were born after 1980. In South Korea, the *generation-Y* consists of adults who were born in the decade beginning in 1976. They have distinguishing characteristics from the previous generation, such as a broad human network, greater adaptability to information and technology, and a self-oriented attitude. Regarding organizational positions, these are people who are staff or deputy managers (Ye, 2009). These younger generation workers play an important role in contemporary South Korean workplaces, providing fresh energy to bring innovative change for organizational development; therefore, many corporations understand the value of those young workers and invest in them. However, workplace conflicts push young workers into unfavorable circumstances with regard to pursuing stable career lives. For example, in 2008, the rate of resignation of new employees within their first year was 27.9% in South Korea (Ye, 2009).

This study was designed to examine younger generation white-collar workers' experiences of interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors in South Korean workplaces using a qualitative research approach. For the purposes of this study, white-collar worker

are those involved in non-manual labor (Prandy et al., 1982), or knowledge work (Ramirez & Nembhard, 2004). It is clear that work life holds an important role in the culture of today. For example, through employment people can realize values, such as financial prosperity, altruism, achievement, and responsibility (Brown, 2002). Working people spend much of their time in the workplace and build relationships with their supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates throughout their lifetimes. In those organizational relationships, conflicts between persons are common occurrences. Veroff, Douvan, and Kulka (1981) stated that interpersonal problems are the primary causes of unhappiness in people's lives. In addition, bad relationships have a more powerful influence on individuals' lives than good relationships (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Interpersonal conflict is "conflict between two or more organizational members of the same or different hierarchical levels or units" (Rahim, 2001, p. 23). Specifically, conflicts between individuals occur when incompatibility is perceived in terms of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes with regard to existing work-related matters (Ting-Toomey, 1994). The range of interpersonal workplace conflicts include perceptions of negative types of interaction from trivial disagreements to serious disputes, verbal abuse, injustice, unfairness, and even physical violence (Schieman & Reid, 2008). Among the various conflicts between persons in the workplace, supervisor-subordinate conflict is typical.

The social environment in the workplace can affect people both positively and negatively (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Human relationships, as one of the essential factors shaping the social environment, influence of employees' work lives in substantial ways.

When we consider the psychological environment of people in the workplace, we need to understand first the supervisor-subordinate relationship (McGregor & Cutcher-Gershenfeld, 2006). This degree of attention exists because the relationship between supervisors and subordinates usually has the possibility of creating serious conflicts which influence employees' psychological and emotional states more than any other kinds of workplace conflicts.

Interpersonal workplace conflicts between supervisors and subordinates in South Korea have been an important workplace issue. For example, a survey of 1,156 white-collar workers in South Korea showed that 40.5% of respondents answered that they had conflicts with their supervisors, 11.9% responded "very frequent" and 28.6% answered "frequent" (Park, 2008). In addition, another survey of 753 South Korean white-collar workers showed that 76.8% of them had considered resignation or turnover because of conflicts with their immediate supervisors (Choi, 2009).

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2008), South Korean workers generate among the largest amount of work hours in the world, 2,256 annual hours (46.6 weekly hours), as compared to an average of 1,764 annual hours in all OECD countries. Therefore, for South Korean employees, the effects of workplace relationships are potentially greater than for employees in other countries.

Moreover, the meaning of work lives for young employees might be different from that of older people. Most young white-collar workers at the lower level of an organization, who have been in their careers for a relatively short period, are inexperienced with regard to organizational culture and behavior; this contributes to the

probability of experiencing workplace conflicts. For example, a survey in South Korea stated that about 65% of older generation white-collar workers responded that they had experienced conflicts with *Y-generation* entry-level workers. South Korean *Y-generation* have different standards that govern their social behavior and methods of communication as well as contribute to their refusal to accept conventional organizational culture (Park, 2009). Appelberg, Romanov, Honkasalo, and Koskenvuo (1991) found that younger age-group workers had more conflicts in the workplace. These workplace conflicts can be linked to young employees' dissatisfaction, demotivation, and turnover in the early stages of being in the workforce, which is a great organizational loss. In South Korea, for instance, a survey of 483 corporations with more than 100 employees showed that they spent an average of 60.88 million Korean Won (about 60,000 U.S. Dollars) to educate each recruited university graduate (Park, 2008). Therefore, if companies lose their young workers at the early stage of employment, the amount of organizational loss is clearly huge, and it would be a serious social loss as well with regard to social expenses for employee training and stable administration of organizations.

Furthermore, considering that the social orientation of South Korea is collectivistic rather than individualistic, human-related aspects at work tend to be more influential than any other factors. Kim, Shapiro, Aquino, and Bennett (2008) observed that South Koreans have a tendency to consider themselves as interdependent and possess a group-related identity. In other words, the relationships that South Korean employees have in the workplace can considerably change aspects of their work lives because of their group-centered social identity. According to Luthans, Rhee, Luthans, and Avey

(2008), South Korea is a strong collectivistic culture that puts a high value on preserving group wellbeing. In addition, social recognition and performance feedback seem to be important for collectivism-centered South Korean employees. In a cross-cultural comparison, social relationships influenced South Korean workers more than American workers in the workplace (Luthans et al., 2008). Asians, including South Koreans, generally view conflicts from a harmony perspective that is related to collectivism (Leung, 2008). In other words, conflicts are a negative factor that disrupts the harmonious social atmosphere. Therefore, a study of interpersonal workplace conflicts in South Korean workplaces has meaning in terms of the deep influence such conflicts have on aspects of workers' work lives including their psychological and emotional states, and work competence.

Zapf et al. (2003) stated that several studies have identified workplace conflicts as an occupational problem primarily through quantitative approaches (e.g., Appelberg, Romanov, Calabrese, 2000; Davis, Kraus, & Capobianco, 2009; De Raeve, Jansen, Brandt, Vasse, & Kant, 2009; Frone, 2000; Honkasalo, & Koskenvuo, 1991; Rahim, 1983; Schieman & Reid, 2008). To be concrete, Appelberg et al. (1991) found that dissatisfaction, stress, neuroticism and hostility increased the risk of interpersonal workplace conflicts. Calabrese (2000) also found causes of workplace conflicts such as an organization's culture, work environment, individual's psychological defenses, organizational leadership, stress, individual's task orientation, and differences in personality. According to Davis et al. (2009), there was a difference between young and old employees in terms of generating and solving workplace conflicts. Frone (2000)

observed that conflicts with supervisors were linked to organization-related psychological outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover. In contrast, conflicts with coworkers were related to personal-level psychological outcomes like depression, self-esteem, and somatic symptoms. Schieman and Reid (2008) verified a positive association between job authority and conflicts, with men and younger age-group workers having an especially higher tendency to experience dissonance.

Even though the issue is important, research on interpersonal workplace conflicts in South Korean workplaces is rare. Additionally, it was hard to find qualitative research on the issue. A qualitative research approach focuses on understanding the meaning that participants have about the issue, and provide valuable insight into phenomena that are otherwise difficult to grasp (Creswell, 2009). Interpersonal conflict is a social phenomenon that occurs between people; thus, there are perceptions and interpretations from the individuals involved, which are the foci of this study. In this aspect, learning about the participants' own meanings can help achieve in-depth understanding of the issue and can supplement research performed using quantitative methods.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to (a) document interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by younger generation white-collar workers in South Korea, (b) investigate personal impacts on younger generation workers, and (c) explore coping strategies that younger generation workers used. Data included stories of younger generation white-collar workers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors.

The goal of this study was to examine the experiences of younger generation South Korean employees as they relate to their elder supervisors. This study assumed that South Korean social and cultural contexts largely affected the dynamics of human relationships in which interpersonal conflicts occur. Therefore, it revealed particular aspects of South Korean workplaces, as experienced by younger generation workers, with regard to organizational human relationships. This study can contribute to the understanding of emerging organizational behaviors among South Korean workers. On a theoretical level, it can illuminate the conceptual framework that supports this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What experiences do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers have with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors?
2. What personal impacts do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experience from interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors?
3. In what ways do younger generation white-collar workers cope with interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships within given social/cultural contexts of South Korea?

Conceptual Framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that a conceptual framework is a visual or written invention to explain a research topic including key factors, concepts, or variables in graphic or descriptive form. Maxwell (2005) described a conceptual framework as “the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports

and informs your research” (p. 33). The conceptual framework for this study was based on a concept and model related to interpersonal conflicts and research assumptions.

Conflict is a common occurrence in organizations, influencing many individuals, organizational processes, and products. In particular, an interpersonal conflict, a perceived incompatibility with regard to values, expectations, processes, or outcomes (Ting-Toomey, 1994), is a dynamic process that occurs between individuals. Additionally, this phenomenon can naturally occur among individuals with varied backgrounds and circumstances, such as situational and personal conditions (Barki & Hartwick, 2004).

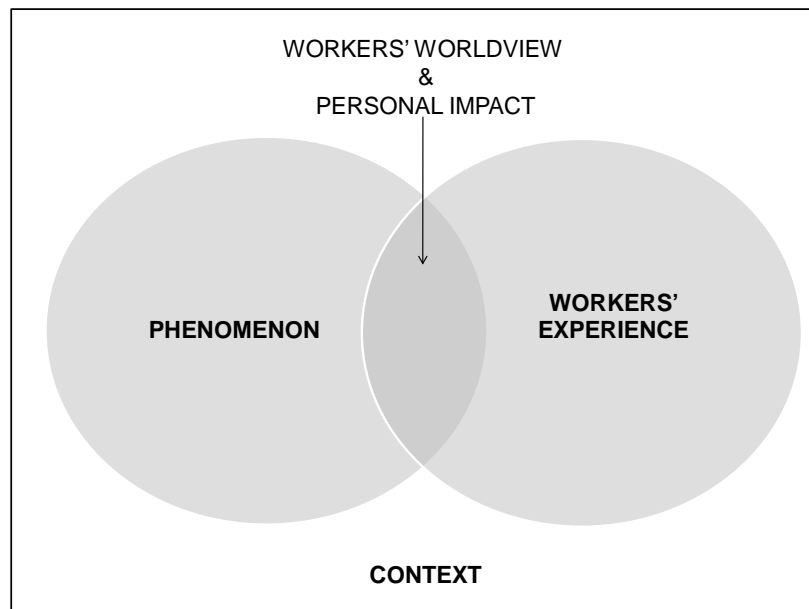


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

As illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework shows the elements of interpersonal workplace conflicts between elder supervisors and younger subordinates in South Korea, including social/cultural contexts that influence the conflicts, workers'

worldviews formed through their perceptions and interpretations, and the personal impacts of interpersonal conflicts on younger generation workers.

The basic assumption of the conceptual framework was derived from Wilmot and Hocker's (2007) lens model of conflict. It is about the process of conflict interactions including communication actions and persons' perceptions of those actions. Each person has his or her own lens consisting of a perspective of him/herself, the other, and the relationship when they perceive all conflicts (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007). In this study, the understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations was based on the lens model. That is, it assumed that employees had their own views about themselves, their supervisors, and the relationships between them. In addition, employees perceived workplace conflicts with their supervisors through the previously established lenses. Therefore, a perception was located at the center of all conflict analysis (Wilmot & Hocker, 2007), which coincided with the focus of this study.

Another important factor in workplace conflicts in South Korea was a social and cultural context. Bandura (2002) stated, "The common human nature is at the level of basic capacities and the specialized mechanisms through which they operate, but cultures shape these potentialities into diverse forms" (p. 273). In other words, culture creates human differences in terms of culturally adapted behaviors and ways of thinking. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) stated, "Each cultural filter influences our perceptions of others' behavior, and therefore is a key to attributions we make" (p. 60). In South Korean society, where there is a strong tendency toward collectivistic culture, each workplace culture is most likely to be affected by features of collectivism. For example,

in supervisor-subordinates relationships, some factors such as characteristics, communication, power, and leadership based on collectivistic cultural contexts could affect the relationships.

Finally, personal impacts on young employees were generated from interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. Buon (2008) stated,

Where conflict is not responded to in a timely and effective way or where it has escalated over time or has become entrenched, it becomes dysfunctional rather than functional. As a result, a whole range of negative effects can be experienced at an individual and/or organizational level. (p. 257)

For example, Frone (2002), in a quantitative study, provided six psychological outcome factors from interpersonal conflicts at work: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, depression, self-esteem, and somatic symptoms.

This study provided additional insights that clarified the personal impacts of interpersonal conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships on younger age-group workers in contemporary South Korean organizations. Participants' stories of their experiences illuminated the personal impacts they perceived.

Importance of the Study

This study is significant in three ways. First, it provides a framework to increase understanding of younger generation white-collar workers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors in South Korean workplaces. This knowledge is helpful to readers of this research as they encourage a good work environment, enhance the quality of

employees' work lives, and minimize organizational loss. Second, this study is beneficial to human resource developers in charge of program planning and development in organizations. By understanding selected employees' experiences, educational programs for conflict management can address the principles of this phenomenon. Third, the study serves as a future reference for researchers on the topic of interpersonal workplace conflicts and social/cultural contexts of South Korea. In particular, it provides qualitative researchers with academic implications, suggestions, and methodological ideas on related subjects.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents the review of the literature that is appropriate for this study. There are nine sections in this chapter. They are: (a) characteristics of the young generation employees in South Korea, (b) the nature of interpersonal conflict, (c) workplace conflict, (d) perspectives on organizational conflict, (e) conflict management theories, (f) individual-level contexts in workplace conflict, (g) organizational-level contexts in workplace conflict, (h) social and cultural-level contexts in workplace conflict, and (i) social and cultural contexts of South Korea in interpersonal workplace conflict.

Characteristics of Younger Generation Employees in South Korea

A recent study about the new generation white-collar workers in South Korea clearly showed their characteristics with regard to behaviors and ways of thinking in organizations. According to Ye (2009), the characteristics of younger generation employees who were born after 1976, and in staff or deputy manager position, could be summarized in five categories: (a) broad networking, (b) sensitivity about rewards and results, (c) adaptability to globalization, information, and technology, (d) active expression of their own feelings and opinions, and (e) self-oriented attitudes.

In particular, Ye (2009) discussed that younger generation employees in South Korea have extensive human networks because they invest in themselves much more

actively than the older generation. They are absorbed in human networking to satisfy their personal interests and curiosities (Ye, 2009). For example, they actively participate in various online communities to get information about their hobbies, education, or shopping. Next, they are more sensitive about rewards and results of their work than the previous generation workers who generally have a high level of commitment to the organization. As a result, younger generation workers tend to change their job easily if they get unsatisfactory evaluation and rewards in the current company. They are also well adapted to globalization and to rapidly changing information and technology because they have many opportunities to experience foreign culture and IT education; thus, they have a strong ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations. In emotional aspects, they more actively articulate their views and emotions than the previous generation. At the same time, they naturally expect their supervisors to give them feedback continuously and to communicate in a rational and bidirectional way. In addition, younger generation workers have high self-oriented propensity; therefore, they attach great importance to privacy and the balance between work and life. Having more spare time and a high quality of life are younger generation's important goals (Ye, 2009).

The Nature of Interpersonal Conflict

There have been various views about the concept of interpersonal conflict. Thomas (1992) defined interpersonal conflict as “the process that begins when one party perceives that the other has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that he or she cares about” (p. 653). In Ting-Toomey's (1994) study, interpersonal conflict was defined as “the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of

values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues” (p. 360). Wall and Callister (1995) explained interpersonal conflict is “a process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (p. 517). In Rahim (2001), it was described as “conflict between two or more organizational members of the same or different hierarchical levels or units” (p. 23). Masters and Albright (2002) mentioned, “Conflict exists when two or more parties disagree about something...The disagreement may be real or merely perceived, but it is psychologically felt by at least one of the parties” (p. 14). Wilmot and Hocker (2007) stated, “Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (p. 9). De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) defined interpersonal conflict as a process that starts when an individual perceives differences and disagreement with another person about interests, resources, viewpoints, values, or practices. In brief, interpersonal conflict is a social phenomenon that occurs when there is a collision between interrelated persons based on a diversity of attitudes, ways of thinking, and desires.

In the process of interpersonal conflict, a person’s perceptions and emotions from conflict experiences are at the center of the phenomenon. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) stated, “When people experience conflicts, much of their energy goes into emotions related to those conflicts” (p. 2). In addition, “Transforming a conflict depends on perceptual and/or conceptual change in one or more of the parties...Perception is at the

core of all conflict analysis” (p. 9). That is, conflicts pass through individuals’ perceptual process and then make emotional change.

Wilmot and Hocker (2007) discussed three different approaches on interpersonal conflict: (a) negative perspective, (b) positive perspective, and (c) neutral perspective. First, a negative perspective on interpersonal conflict assumes that conflict is abnormal and generates negative emotion like anger; therefore, conflict is regarded as something to be prevented and minimized. Meanwhile, a positive perspective views that interpersonal conflict is natural and inevitable in human life; therefore, it can be managed and solved in a constructive way. This approach also insists that conflict gives people an opportunity to identify problems and join together to discuss a way of solving problems. In addition, there is a neutral view; that is, conflict is not a positive or negative phenomenon but includes the potential for either, depending on the way it is regulated.

Lens Model of Conflict

The lens model of conflict is about the mechanism of conflict between persons. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2007), all conflicts have two essential aspects: Communication behaviors and accompanying perceptions of those behaviors. As Figure 2 shows, the lens model’s assumption is that each individual has his/her own view of “oneself, the other person, and the relationship” (p. 49). In addition, “the communicative acts of each person; the meanings attached to those acts by each person; the meanings the two people ascribe to their relationship” (p. 49) are the factors that determine an aspect of interpersonal conflict.

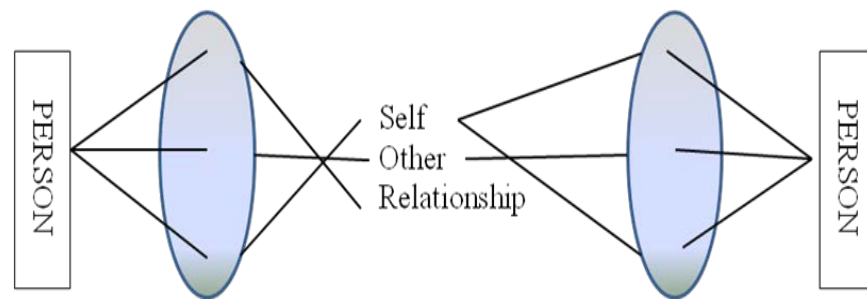


Figure 2. The Lens Model of Conflict Interaction

These perceptual elements make the basic views of conflicts, and join together to create a specific conflict. As a result, perceptions and attributions about behaviors occupy the center of the conflict process. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) discussed that attribution research shows people’s different ways of attribution well. That is, people try to understand behaviors by searching for causes, and use external attribution for their own behaviors while using internal attribution for other’s behaviors. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) demonstrated this characteristic, connecting interpersonal conflict, “We use a different lens for viewing ourselves than we do for viewing others. When we are exposed to conflict, we tend to attribute the negative effects to the other rather than to ourselves” (p. 50).

Workplace Conflict

Masters and Albright (2002) defined workplace conflict, as “disagreements between two or more parties interdependent in the workplace, be it a common physical site or another medium through which work is performed” (p. 15). In this aspect, the disagreement may occur over various matters and for many reasons regardless of the work site. In addition, workplace conflicts may be shown emotionally, attitudinally, and

behaviorally. Behavioral appearances come to be disturbing mainly when they threaten an individual's well-being (Masters & Albright, 2002).

With regard to the types of workplace conflict, Masters and Albright (2002) stated that interests, rights, and power are three categories that cover most workplace conflicts regardless of the status or intensity. Interests mean what people want to receive in consequence of their association with work, from general treatment at work to more particular matters including assignment, evaluation, promotion, and compensation; therefore, conflicts over interests occur when people are dissatisfied. These types of conflicts take place among and between workers at a variety of levels in an organization. Conflicts over rights concern legally protected rights or unofficial common laws with regard to employment. In addition, most organizations have their own systems of internal rights, such as contractual agreements or policy statements. Therefore, violation of employees' rights may bring workplace conflicts. Power can be viewed as the ability to obstruct other people's efforts or to attempt to force an agreement by increasing the costs of disagreement; that is, inappropriate abuse of power creates conflicts between people, especially in supervisor-subordinate relationships in organizations.

Perspectives on Organizational Conflict

There are three different views on organizational conflict: (a) the classical view, (b) the neo-classical view, and (c) the modern view. The differences are based on the positivity and negativity of conflicts, and approaches to dealing with organizational conflicts.

The Classical View of Organizational Conflict

Rahim (2001) stated that organizational conflict was considered as what is detrimental to organizational efficiency from the classical perspective. As a result, the classical theorists implicitly assumed that it would be better for conflict to be minimized by making mechanistic or bureaucratic organizational structures. This perspective on organizational management insisted that organizational effectiveness can be achieved by only positive aspects, such as harmony, cooperation, and the nonexistence of conflict; therefore, a clear statement about rules, processes, and hierarchy were the best way to prevent conflict among members in the organization.

The Neo-classical View of Organizational Conflict

According to Rahim (2001), the neo-classical perspective also considered conflict as a dysfunctional occurrence. That is, conflict is detrimental to the organization; therefore, no existing of conflict is ideal from this view. The difference between the classical and neo-classical perspective is in the approach to eliminate conflict from organizations. Neo-classical theorists explicitly tried to remove and minimize conflict by enhancing social systems and changing the technical and structural systems of organizations to enhance organizational effectiveness.

The Modern View of Organizational Conflict

According to Rahim (2001), the modern perspective viewed that conflict is not necessarily dysfunctional for the organization. Modern theorists discussed that a moderate amount of conflict is needed to attain an optimal level of efficiency in the

organization when it is handled in a constructive way. Whyte (as cited in Rahim, 2001) described the functions of conflict in an organization clearly:

Harmony is an undesirable goal for the functioning of an organization. The objective should not be to build a harmonious organization, but to build an organization capable of recognizing the problems it faces and developing ways of solving these problems. Since conflicts are an inevitable part of organizational life, it is important that conflict resolution procedure be built into the design of organizations. (p. 11)

This is a core reasoning to understand the shift in conceptualization of organizational conflict; that is, modern theorists viewed that healthy organizations seek to make effective ways of using conflict for their development rather than trying to eliminate conflict. Conflict within certain limits is recognized as essential to organizational productivity from the modern perspective; that is, the efficacy of a good conflict was discussed. According to Bacal (1998), a good organizational conflict is disagreement, which maintains organizations as well as workers to grow, helps them solve problems effectively, and keeps appropriate levels of strain to develop organizations. Good organizational conflict allows people to identify what they take for granted as well as unproductive old ways of work. Positive conflict also encourages creativity and problem solving abilities (Bacal, 1998).

Conflict Management Theories

There are two influential theories about the aspects of human relationships, including the cases that create conflict situation. Deutsch's theory of cooperation and

competition is based on the attitude toward ways of connecting one's goals with other's goals. Double concern theory is based on the levels of concern for self and other.

Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation and Competition

De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) explained a theory according to which disputants perceive their final goals to be positively connected (cooperative interdependence), negatively connected (competitive interdependence), or not connected (independence). Disputants attempt to maximize their own outcomes only, with a negative regard for their counterparts' outcomes when they are competitively interdependent. It brings distrust, unfriendly attitudes, and negative perceptions between persons; therefore, disputants tend to apply persuasive arguments, positional commitments, and coercive power to attain their way. In contrast, disputants attach importance to maximization of both their own and other's outcomes when they are cooperatively interdependent; therefore, it makes trust, positive attitudes and perceptions, as well as productive exchange of information. Parties listen and try to understand one another's point of view. As a result, it can contribute to creating good conditions for learning, innovation, and team efficiency, and can enhance the quality of decision making in the workplace.

Dual Concern Theory

According to De Dreu and Gelfand (2008), dual concern theory explains that conflict management is a kind of function which consists of a combination with high/low concern for self and high/low concern for others; that is, there are four different combinations with regard to conflict. High concern for self combined with

low concern for others causes a preference for forcing stress by enforcing one's will on other people (unilateral action). Forcing includes threats and bluffs, arguments to persuade, and positional commitments. Low concern for self combined with high concern for others makes yielding, which involves accepting and integrating other's will. It contains unilateral concessions, unconditional agreements, and giving help (unilateral action). Low concern for both self and others causes avoiding, which involves decreasing the significance of the issues and attempts to restrain considering the issues (unilateral action). The combination of high concern for both self and others makes problem solving, which pursues maximizing both one's own and other's goals (joint action). In this case, parties exchange information with regard to priorities between their work issues and make tradeoffs based on the importance of issues. In addition, there have been suggestions that the combination of intermediate concern for self and others brings a preference for compromising.

Individual-level Contexts in Workplace Conflict

Individual-level contexts directly affect the incidence of workplace conflicts. Individual differences, such as age, personality, and gender could produce different phases of workplace conflicts. Even if people experience similar conflicts, the magnitude of impact may vary according to their individual differences. In short, individual-level contexts play a role in causes and effects of workplace conflicts.

Age

Age difference in terms of technical and informational adaptability, life experiences, and thoughts about the proper role for the job can create tension between

persons of different ages (Northam, 2009). For example, Davis, Kraus, and Capobianco (2009) discovered that the way of responding to workplace conflict situations is different between younger and older workers; older workers are more likely to show non-confrontational responses. Age factors may reflect phases within the career that a person experiences at work.

Personality

Another significant factor in the individual dimension is personality. Baron (1989) showed that the type A personality characterized by “high level of competitiveness, time urgency, and interpersonal hostility” (p. 282) and had a higher frequency of conflict in the workplace than the type B personality. Another study by Harvey, Blouin, and Stout (2006) discussed people who have high proactive personalities and can be described as “one who is relatively unconstrained by situational force and who effects environmental change” (p. 1065), such people scored much worse on strain related to school and work as well as job satisfaction. Personality determines a person’s ways of coping with workplace conflict and causes different outcomes and influences. According to Wood & Bell (2008), personality was also identified as an important predictor of conflict resolution style.

Gender

Gender differences exist in workplace conflict. For instance, male workers tended to have an assertive style, whereas female workers tended to have an avoidance style when they encounter workplace conflict (Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002). In addition, women were generally more cooperative than men in terms of conflict resolution

(Brahnam, Margavio, Hignite, Barrier, & Chin, 2005).

Additionally, in Almost's (2006) study, individual characteristics, such as value differences and demographic dissimilarity were identified as antecedents of consequences from perceived conflicts at work. Interpersonal factors, such as low level of trust, injustice or disrespect, and ineffective communication were also significant antecedents that affected consequences of conflict (Almost, 2006).

Organizational-level Contexts in Workplace Conflict

Organizational-level contexts clearly influence workplace conflict. They are significant factors that determine workers' attitudes and behaviors (Clinebell & Shadwick, 2005). According to Rousseau (1978), context means a set of environments or facts behind an event; features of the organizational setting; individuals' role in the organization; and any other circumstantial factors creating responses. Organizational contexts have been considered as a significant issue in which to examine individual responses related to attitudes at work (Clinebell & Shadwick, 2005). This is because a person's style of thinking and behaving in the organization is directly influenced by organizational contexts.

Organizational Structure

Almost (2006) stated that the degree and aspects of interdependence among workers affect the consequences of workplace conflicts. For example, a lower degree of interdependence in teams reduces the impact of conflict. In addition, an organizational structure that provides collaborative conditions prevents or decreases workplace conflict, but a structure that creates power imbalance causes conflict because each party considers

conflict as a way of raising their power in the organization (Almost, 2006). In short, the level of workplace conflict could be increased or decreased according to whether organizational structure is appropriate.

Work Environment

De Raeve, Jansen, van den Brandt, Vasse, and Kant (2009) showed the overall aspects of risk factors in the work environment that cause interpersonal workplace conflicts. They stated the following:

Higher psychological job demands, higher levels of role ambiguity, the presence of physical demands, higher musculoskeletal demands, a poorer physical work environment, shift work, overtime, and higher levels of job insecurity significantly predicted the onset of both a coworker conflict and a supervisor conflict. Higher levels of coworker and supervisor social support, more autonomy concerning the terms of employment, good overall job satisfaction, monetary gratification, and esteem reward significantly protected against the onset of both a coworker conflict and a supervisor conflict. Higher levels of decision latitude and more career opportunities also significantly protected against the onset of a supervisor conflict. (p. 96)

Work environment is a part of the social environment that affects human behavior. Most workers are exposed to their work environment every day; therefore, it is obvious that the social environment within their workplace unconsciously influences their attitudes and job satisfaction levels.

Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a set of values and norms that organizational members

share and which control human interactions in the organization (Hill & Jones, 2001). Therefore, organizational culture largely affects individuals' behaviors and thoughts including interpersonal interactions. For instance, Hershcovis et al. (2007) discussed that distributive injustice is perceived as unfairness of outcomes and procedural injustice; therefore, perceived unfairness of the procedures influences the triggering of interpersonal aggression.

Leadership and Work Ethics

Xin and Pelled (2003) stated that both emotional and task conflict have a negative relationship with subordinates' perceptions of leadership behaviors of supervisors. Hershcovis et al. (2007) stated, "Poor leadership encompasses a range of leadership perceptions and behaviors, including perceptions of supervisor hostile verbal and non-verbal behavior, over-control, authoritarian management style, and lack of charismatic leadership" (p. 231). As a result, poor leadership was verified as the strongest predictor of interpersonal aggression of subordinates (Hershcovis et al., 2007).

Another important cause of interpersonal conflict is difference in work ethics. For example, cultural differences concerning work ethic factors, such as time, urgency, and implementation can cause stress and conflict between persons at work (Jassawalla, Truglia, & Garvey, 2004). In addition, work ethic is one of the essential elements of conflict and conflict resolution (Virovere, Kooskora, & Valler, 2002). As Hill and Fouts (2005) stated, "By praising worker's expressions of positive work ethic attributes, supervisors can encourage productive work in their employees and at the same time help accomplish organizational goals" (p. 61). Therefore, the upholding of an appropriate

work ethic would be helpful to prevent and resolve workplace conflict and to enhance productivity.

Power and Job Authority

The relationship between power and conflict is essential to understand organizational behaviors. Power concerns the ways persons control other people and resources within organizations (Schieman & Reid, 2008). In Schieman and Reid (2008), a positive use for job authority means legitimate relations between leaders and followers in terms of structured roles in the organization. However, a negative use for job authority is a potential to make interpersonal workplace conflicts. That is, excessive job authority of supervisors can unconstructively influence the relationship between supervisors and subordinates.

Social and Cultural-level Contexts in Workplace Conflict

Social/cultural contexts should be considered in order to comprehend workplace conflict. Concerning the influence of culture, Schein (2010) stated:

Cultural forces are powerful because they operate outside of our awareness. We need to understand them not only because of their power but also because they help to explain many of our puzzling and frustrating experiences in social and organizational life. (p. 7)

Every individual lives in a society with specific contexts based on its historical, traditional, and cultural backgrounds. All organizations also exist within a social framework in which common values and ways of thinking are shared among society members. In this respect, interpersonal workplace conflict is a small part of the entire

social phenomena reflecting society's own characteristics; therefore, it is natural that phases of workplace conflict vary according to specific social contexts.

Cultural Orientation

The concept of cultural orientation is based on social identity theory. Social identity theory explains individuals' ways of recognizing their own group membership by determining social boundaries within particular groups; therefore, people are able to categorize themselves as belonging or not belonging to the groups (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006).

The issue of individualism versus collectivism would be representative of the concept of cultural orientation. According to Gundlach et al. (2006), "Individualism and collectivism is an analytical dimension that captures the relative importance people accord to personal interests and shared pursuits" (p. 1608). Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier (2002) stated, "The core element of individualism is the assumption that individuals are independent of one another" (p. 4). The characteristic of individualism as identified by Hofstede (1980) is an emphasis on oneself and personal achievement with autonomy, a priority on rights rather than duties, and a concern for immediate family. Meanwhile, collectivists consider group interests as more significant than individual needs and pursue their group well-being, which sometimes requires a sacrifice of individual interests (Gundlach, Zivnuska, & Stoner, 2006).

The cultural theory suggests "four ways of organizing, justifying, and perceiving social relations: individualism, hierarchy, egalitarianism, and fatalism" (Rao & Walton, 2004, p. 110). These cultural characteristics reflect cultural values that determine shared

trends of human behaviors within a specific society. In other words, cultural values include the implicitly or explicitly shared conceptual ideas about social norms that guide people to act appropriately in various situations (Schwartz, 1999). A theory of the types of cultural values identified three contrastive pairs as “conservatism versus intellectual and affective autonomy; hierarchy versus egalitarianism; and mastery versus harmony” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 23) based on data from around the world. Cultural values provide society members with a framework for personal meaning. For example, cultural values impact the meaning of work in terms of “work centrality, societal norms about work, and work goals” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 40). In addition, difference in culture largely influences behaviors in the workplace (Yu & Miller, 2003). This means that there could be interpersonal workplace conflict due to a misunderstanding of other cultures especially in organizations with members who come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, cultural variety can give organizations a synergetic power to enlarge cultural perspective, which can translate into a good opportunity to be a globally competitive workplace.

Traditional Culture

Every country has its own traditional culture mainly based on its historical and philosophical backgrounds. Such culture influences almost all settings in a society including public administration, workplaces, schools, and families. People naturally learn traditional values in their society through parents, teachers, and media. In short, traditional culture is one of the fundamental elements in the process of socialization that strongly influence an individual’s life.

For example, Northam (2009) stated that Asian cultures emphasize respectful attention to the senior, which can cause the misinterpretation of agreement or acquiescence in daily life experiences. In South Korean society, Confucian social norms and values largely contribute to shaping individuals' strategies of behaviors (Kihl, 1994).

Social and Cultural Contexts of South Korea in Workplace Conflict

Social and cultural influences affect the process of human interaction. Wilmot and Hocker (2007) stated, "Each cultural filter influences our perceptions of others' behavior, and therefore it is a key to attributions we make" (p. 60) because social/cultural contexts provide us with a frame for understanding and interpreting of others' patterns of behavior. For example, in South Korean society where there is a strong tendency of collectivistic culture, each workplace culture is most likely to be affected by features of collectivism; therefore, individual actions, such as not participating in group activities represented by dining together and drinking parties after work (the so-called *Hwi-Shik* in Korean) are considered to be unfavorable behavior.

Various aspects of human interactions exist in the workplace and a cultural/social frame is always at play. Clearly, work life holds an important meaning for many people. People spend much of their time in the workplace and make relationships with their supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates throughout their lifetimes. The social environment in the workplace affects workers both positively and negatively (Bowling & Beehr, 2006). Therefore, human relationships in the social environment at work have an important meaning because these relationships influence employees' work experiences in some way or another.

Glomb and Welsh (2005) stated, “Interpersonal behaviors can be described along two dimensions: affiliation and control. Affiliation behaviors range from friendliness to hostility, whereas, control behaviors range from dominance to submission” (p. 750). Interpersonal conflict may be located on the negative side of both affiliation and control behaviors dimension. Therefore, to investigate the nature of interpersonal conflict in the workplace as well as the social and cultural contexts behind the phenomenon would be meaningful and beneficial for academic inquiry.

Culture guides and restricts behaviors of members of a social group through the uniquely shared social norms (Schein, 2010). Alwin (1995) defined social structure as a series of “opportunities and constraints within networks of roles, relationships, and communication patterns” (p. 218). In addition, social structure influences the formation of cultural stereotypes and emotional prejudices (Caprariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009). Social phenomena are largely affected by cultural and social structure. In a society with its own characteristic social and cultural structure, each individual acts within the limits of the social and cultural frame. For example, the culture of respect for the old and a rigid seniority system in organizations reflects the social/cultural structure of South Korea.

Culture means a group of people’s ways of life that is established through common stereotyped patterns of learned behaviors and beliefs in a society, and it continues from generation to generation mainly through language and social learning such as observation or imitation (Adler & Gundersen, 2008). Specifically, culture is “the configuration of shared attitudes, values, goals, spiritual beliefs, social expectations, arts, technology, and behaviors that characterize a broader society in which people live”

(Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2009, p. 10). Furthermore, Schein (2010) stated that culture means some level of structural stability; that is, it is not just shared but stable as it defines the social group. Once people attain a sense of group identity in the culture, it becomes people's main stabilizing force. In addition, it is not easily given up or changed because cultural stability provides group members with meaning and predictability (Schein, 2010). Besides, cultural structure could be seen as the accumulation of social structure for several generations in a society; therefore, it may be much harder to change, and the influencing power of cultural structure on human behaviors is substantial.

The Confucian tradition is the core of the social and cultural structure of the South Korean society. Confucianism maintains a strong sense of hierarchy because it was the philosophy for a centralized monarchy in ancient China as well as for royal authorities in the Chosun era of ancient South Korea, which emphasized social rank and ethics, such as diligence, responsibility, and cooperation (Jacobs, Guopei, & Herbig, 1995; Kim, 2010). Kihl (1994) stated, "The influence of Confucianism on South Korea's traditional culture was, needless to say, both profound and pervasive" (p. 37). Confucianism is characterized as a status quo-oriented system with an emphasis on family, social harmony, and hierarchy (Kihl, 1994). Therefore, it is natural that South Korean society has a distinct tendency toward collectivism. South Korean people generally acquire Confucian virtues, such as filial piety, respect for seniors, and obedience to organizational rules from childhood through school education or training at home as a part of the socialization process. It is apparent that these learned ideas and attitudes have a significant impact on all South Koreans' ways of life.

The cultural characteristics of South Korean society that are applicable to interpersonal conflict can be identified by examining several key studies. Kim, Shapiro, Aquino, and Bennett (2008) stated that South Koreans have a tendency to consider themselves as interdependent and possessing a group-related identity. In addition, Luthans, Rhee, Luthans, and Avey (2008) mentioned that South Korea as a strong collectivistic culture places a high value on preserving group wellbeing. South Korean culture has a thread of connection with collectivism and attaches great importance to social harmony based on Confucianism.

As Wilmot and Hocker (2007) stated, our social perceptions are largely affected by cultural filters that each society has. Interpersonal conflict, as one of many social phenomena, also follows the rule of social and cultural structure. Conflict between persons is regarded as a dynamic process with various situational and personal conditions (Barki & Hartwick, 2004). Of course, these conditions are also made in existing social and cultural structure. Therefore, South Koreans' ways of reacting to interpersonal conflict is likely to be formed in the Confucian social frame.

Social harmony would be the most relevant value of Confucianism concerning interpersonal conflict. According to Hook, Worthington Jr., and Utsey (2009), group norms that encourage social harmony usually exist in collectivistic societies; therefore, people in a collectivistic society are likely to avoid conflict, diminish the noticeable expression of conflict, and attempt to resolve conflict. In other words, collectivists who are concerned with maintaining positive human relationships, upholding social harmony, and maximizing positive results for the group's honor, may consider conflicts as what

social resolution is needed, even if they have to suffer a personal sacrifice. In addition, people in a collectivistic society show a relatively high level of empathy; therefore, understanding of others and sharing responsibility with offenders are common actions. These actions exist because generous coping strategies may make it easier for collectivistic people to decide to forgive and reconcile with their offenders (Hook, Worthington Jr., & Utsey, 2009). For that reason, there would be a good chance that South Koreans' attitudes toward conflict with others is passive and evasive, so they will not deviate from the social norms in South Korea.

The propensity toward elusive dealing with interpersonal conflict is likewise found in South Korean organizations, especially when conflicts exist between supervisors and subordinate. This is because vertical conflict makes people more uncomfortable than horizontal conflict in terms of the Confucian social frame. Above all, Confucianism's ethics have provided the ideological rationale for subordinative relationships between supervisors and subordinates in order to operate a bureaucracy smoothly (Kim & Park, 2003). South Koreans who are accustomed to the Confucian tradition might have a more receptive attitude toward this kind of vertical relationship even in the case that supervisors act with authoritarian attitudes. For example, a study on government officers' way of conflict management in South Korea showed that they behaved in a dominating way to subordinates but were obliging to supervisors and avoided conflict with them (Lee & Jeon, 2003).

Cultural Contexts of Employee's Age in the South Korean Workplace

It is clear that the cultural context of age is a very influential factor in understanding the impact of workplace conflict. This age-related cultural context

provides the fundamental background of organizational characteristics in South Korea, and it should be examined to make sense of South Korean workplace culture. Some organizational cultures were derived from the cultural context of workers' age in South Korean society.

Lee (2007) discussed that the seniority system in many South Korean organizations provides criteria for personnel management based on employees' educational level, age, and length of service, in contrast to the merit system. It has represented the characteristic of governmental and business organizations in South Korea for a long time, even though many organizations currently are trying to change their system into a merit system to enhance business administration efficiency. Many South Korean organizations usually adopted this seniority system to operate a hierarchal system efficiently and induce an individual worker's long-term of labor for stabilization of organizations. However, the seniority system caused a decrease in labor productivity because it gives more weight to employees' age than ability (Lee, 2007).

The bureaucratic system is also one of the outstanding factors characterizing the South Korean workplace in terms of the cultural context of age. According to Lee (2007), Max Weber developed the concept of bureaucracy as an ideal type model, which was the first attempt to explain a systematic bureaucratic organization. Cameron and Quinn (1999) stated that it is characterized as a very regulative and structured organizational system in a hierarchical culture. The main roles of leadership in bureaucratic organizations are adjustment and systemization, so efficiency can be pursued smoothly (Cameron & Quinn, 1999). For that reason, the strict seniority-based system was adopted

for the stable persistency of an organization. In South Korea, even though there has been much criticism of dysfunctions in the bureaucratic system, its significant role in the operation of South Korean organizations, including the governmental system cannot be ignored (Lee, 2007).

Authoritarianism based on the seniority system might be an organizational characteristic that is resistant to reform in the South Korean workplace. It is a heteronomous organizational culture based upon strict vertical relationships, unilateral communication, rigid atmosphere, and a non-participative culture (Hwang, 2003). In other words, authoritarianism has a strong trend of top-down communication based on a hierarchical system. It is hard for subordinates to participate in the decision-making process or to suggest creative ideas in such an organizational culture. This authoritarian cultural trend is distinguished in a collectivistic society rather than an individualistic society. Hofstede (1991) stated that an individualism-centered society places more emphasis on employees' privacy, diversity of managerial leadership, priority on individual decisions, and encouragement of autonomous as well as challenging performance. Meanwhile, collectivism-centered societies, such as Asian countries including South Korea give priority to group decision making, organizational harmony, and order between supervisors and subordinates (Hofstede, 1991).

Age-related cultural context represented by the seniority-based, bureaucratic, and authoritarian system in the South Korean workplace is based on a long-held Confucian tradition of respecting seniors. Generally, seniors occupy a higher position in South Korean organizations, and they are accustomed to the senior-privileged system and

hierarchical work environment. However, this kind of organizational characteristic based on cultural backgrounds is not a favorable condition for younger generation workers because of the continuous change of consciousness about the traditional Confucian culture. For example, in a study on conflict management styles of the new generation, young employees reported that they experienced conflict more with supervisors than co-workers (Kim & Shin, 2002). This finding implies that young workers could feel some difficulties in coping with interpersonal conflicts in the workplace because of their different social and cultural perspectives from the older generation.

Differences in Influences of Workplace Conflicts by Age

Ye and Chin (2009) stated younger generation South Korean workers as a new generation are well accustomed to information and technology; therefore, they can easily acquire a lot of information from the Internet. Furthermore, compared to the older generation, they have much more experience with study and travel abroad, especially in non-Confucian culture; they also receive sufficient economic support from their parents; and they have more opportunities to think creatively in educational settings (Ye & Chin, 2009). These attributes of younger generation South Korean workers' life experiences have continuously influenced ways of thinking and viewing about their society.

Recent studies on characteristics of the new generation workers revealed that they are very self-centered and reject authoritarian rules in the workplace without explanation. In addition, they are vulnerable to criticism; rapidly adapt to new technology and change; and build a broad range of social networks with friends and acquaintances (Ye & Chin, 2009). These characteristics of younger generation South Korean workers imply that

they are likely to have a personalized way of dealing with social phenomenon, such as workplace conflicts.

A recent survey on conflict between the new generation and the older generation in the South Korean workplace showed that 65% of young workers answered, “Yes, there is conflict due to the generation gap”, and the main reasons were all linked to a discrepancy in the new generation’s pattern of behavior and understanding of social norms (Park, 2009). This research implies the presence of clear differences between the two generations in terms of impacts of workplace conflict as well as ways of coping with it.

Chapter Summary

This literature review chapter presented literature appropriate to this study. This chapter discussed: (a) characteristics of the young generation employees in South Korea, (b) the nature of interpersonal conflicts, (c) workplace conflicts, (d) perspectives on organizational conflicts, (e) conflict management theories, (f) individual-level contexts in workplace conflicts, (g) organizational-level contexts in workplace conflicts, (h) social and cultural-level contexts in workplace conflicts, and (i) social and cultural contexts of South Korea in interpersonal workplace conflicts. In Chapter 3, the design of this study is discussed.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to: (a) document interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by younger generation white-collar workers in South Korea, (b) investigate personal impacts on younger generation workers, and (c) explore coping strategies that younger generation workers used. The research questions that guided this study were: (a) what experiences do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers have with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors? (b) what personal impacts do South Korean younger white-collar workers experience from interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors? and (c) in what ways do younger generation white-collar workers cope with interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships within given social/cultural contexts of South Korea?

In this chapter, information concerning: (a) the design of the study, (b) sample selection, (c) data collection, (d) data analysis, (e) validity, (f) researcher bias and assumptions, and (g) translation issues are provided. The following information explains the methodology and the means by which the research questions of this study were investigated.

Design of the Study

A qualitative research design was used to guide the completion of this study. Denzin and Lincoln (2007) stated, “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates

the observer in the world” (p. 4), and “Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get better understanding of the subject matter at hand” (p. 5). That is, the goals of a qualitative approach are to develop understanding, to describe multiple realities, to capture naturally occurring behaviors, and to see insider meaning rather than to test hypotheses, to show relationships, or to predict probability. Qualitative research includes various types of methods to analyze different kinds of data, such as spoken, visual, textual, or material things (Atkinson & Delamont, 2008).

Merriam (2009) stated, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experience, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). Qualitative research is a method for looking at and making sense of the meaning of social phenomena ascribed by individuals or groups. The research entails emerging questions and processes, data collected in the participant’s situation, data analysis from particular to broad subjects, and the researcher’s interpretations of the implications of the data (Creswell, 2009). The researchers observe how and why phenomena occur with qualitative data that comprises words and categories. Therefore, this qualitative approach will provide understanding of participants’ experiences and ways of interpreting those experiences (Johnson & Christenson, 2007).

According to Maxwell (2005), the aim of qualitative research is not generalization, which is sometimes considered to be a limitation. Instead, in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon is the most important aim of a qualitative approach; thus, this

approach is useful when we want to look at specific situations in which people's experiences or details of perception and interpretation are of interest. In other words, generalizability in a qualitative study has a different meaning from that in a quantitative approach. Maxwell (2005) discussed the importance of internal generalizability of qualitative research, which refers to the generalization about a conclusion within the setting or group being studied. External generalizability is not generally provided by qualitative studies.

A phenomenological approach was applied to this research for in-depth understanding of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea through experiences of younger generation white-collar workers. As Lester (1999) stated, "The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation" (p. 1). Therefore, this phenomenological method of investigation highlighted what occurred within a situation that involved conflicts between supervisors and subordinates, exploring such factors as reasons for the conflicts, personal impacts on workers, and ways of coping within the social and cultural contexts of South Korea.

Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated, "Phenomenology is the study of the world as it appears to individuals when they lay aside the prevailing understanding of those phenomena and revisit their immediate experience of the phenomena" (p. 495). Bednall (2006) said that phenomenology is interested in identifying that which is intrinsic and static in the meaning of phenomena under examination. The goal of phenomenology is describing and understanding the nature of lived experience of people who have gone

through a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2010). Phenomenological research provides a significant function by investigating the depths of human experience (Lichman, 2010). In this study, participants' stories about their experiences and their interpretation of interpersonal workplace conflicts provided the data to understand the research topic. The data concerned the intrinsic nature of interpersonal workplace conflict within South Korean companies from participants' viewpoints. Lester (1999) stated, "Phenomenological research studies make detailed comments about individual situations which do not lend themselves to direct generalization in the same way which is sometimes claimed for survey research" (p. 2). The usefulness of this phenomenological approach is its encouragement of a deep understanding through statements of participants' experiences.

The procedure of a phenomenological study includes the following activities: (a) identifying a topic of individual and social importance, (b) selecting suitable participants, (c) interviewing the participants, and (d) analysis of the data. This process framed the research method of this study. My role as a researcher was to observe the participants' stories holistically rather than in piece, so I could focus on the stories in terms of each participant's experiences and perceptions (Gall et al., 2007).

The topic of this study, interpersonal workplace conflict, linked directly to essential elements in phenomenology, such as stories about people's immediate experiences, description of their perceptions and feelings, and intrinsic and static meanings of a phenomenon (Bednall, 2006; Gall et al., 2007). Therefore, participants' narratives of their experiences related to interpersonal workplace conflicts as explained

from their perspectives were analyzed. This qualitative exploration revealed the personal impacts of workplace conflicts through participants' perceptions. Furthermore, social and cultural contexts were strong influential factors because they created the social framework within which the interpersonal workplace conflicts occurred. This was a particularly important consideration since a distinguishing collectivistic social culture influenced individuals' ways of thinking as well as the formation of organizational dynamics in South Korean society. Therefore, individuals' personal understanding of workplace conflict was derived within South Korea's social and cultural contexts.

In short, the study used a phenomenological approach that created an amplified understanding of the experiences of young workers in terms of interpersonal workplace conflicts within the specific social and cultural contexts of South Korea.

Sample Selection

Patton (2002) stated, "Qualitative inquiry typically focuses on relatively small samples...selected purposefully to permit inquiry into an understanding of a phenomenon in depth" (p. 46). Because qualitative research generally intends to explore diversity within a limited population and focuses on the importance of context (Barbour, 2001), the sampling process in qualitative studies is not as strictly prescribed as in quantitative research, which aspires to statistical generalizability (Coyne, 1997).

Merriam (2009) stated regarding the characteristic of sampling in qualitative studies, "Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research.

Therefore, non-probability sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research” (p. 77). A non-probability sampling approach is also known as purposive, purposeful, or criterion-based sampling (Merriam, 2009). This sampling method is a strategic approach for the deliberate selection of particular persons, settings, or activities to obtain information that could not be gained through other approaches (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, the establishment of criteria was the first step in selecting participants and sites to be investigated in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009).

In this study, criterion-based selection as a purposeful sampling technique provided a basic framework. This approach required the researcher to identify beforehand a series of attributes, factors, characteristics or criteria for selecting participants, and then to make sure these variables were displayed in the selected sample (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). Criterion-based sampling works well in cases in which all persons studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). According to Crabtree and Miller (1999), the criterion-based sampling method is a commonly used sampling strategy for phenomenological studies. In other words, it is a kind of sampling for selecting participants who have experienced a specific phenomenon (Endacott & Botti, 2007).

In criterion-based sampling, the criteria a researcher creates for sampling “directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (Merriam, 2009, p. 78). Polkinghorne (2005) stated, “In criterion sampling, participants are selected who meet some important predetermined criterion. For example, a study of the experience of psychotherapy might select as participants those

whose initial therapy began after the age of 50” (p. 141). This example had a very similar frame for determining samples in terms of a specific experience and age group for this study.

Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2007) suggested two considerations about criterion-based sampling: all participants must have experienced the phenomenon under investigation, and they must be able to articulate their lived experiences.

Based on suggestions in the literature, the first step in the sampling process for my study was to establish the criteria of sampling that is directly related to my purposes for the study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to document the South Korean younger generation white-collar workers’ experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors, to examine personal impacts of those conflicts, and to investigate coping strategies that the young employees used. Therefore, the sampling criteria in this research included the following conditions, and all participants met the following requirements: (a) all participants were native South Koreans; (b) all were white-collar workers in staff or deputy manager positions and were members of younger generation, meaning they were born after 1976; (c) they all had experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors; and (d) they were able to orally articulate their experiences. In particular, the criteria for determining generation was based on Ye’s (2009) study about the new generation white-collar workers in South Korea, which reflected South Korean work settings and characteristics of young South Korean workers.

Homogeneous sampling was also appropriate for doing this qualitative research. This method intentionally reduced variation and allowed a more focused inquiry. Researchers can employ this approach in the event that they want to comprehend a particular human group well (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). A homogeneous sampling approach was directly applied to this study; that is, younger generation (born after 1976) white-collar workers in Seoul, South Korea were chosen as interviewees. This narrowed sampling approach allowed me to investigate participants' experiences and accompanying psychological aspects with precision.

The sampling approach for this study also included snowball/chain referral sampling. This sampling is a strategic method in which researchers can expand samples through recommendations from participants (Groenewald, 2004); that is, informants with whom contact has been made use their own social networks to refer the researcher to others who can potentially take part in or contribute to the research. Devers and Frankel (2000) mentioned, "Accessing existing social networks (e.g., colleagues, friends, other personal contacts) can be useful for obtaining basic information and facilitating entrée" (p. 266). A deep understanding is the core of phenomenological study; therefore, rapport building is necessary to obtain intended information from participants. However, it takes much time to create rapport with a person one has never met before; therefore, snowball/chain referral sampling was valuable both in terms of time and the complexity of rapport building as snowball/chain referral sampling could save time and accelerated the rapport building process.

Most qualitative research has much smaller sample sizes than quantitative research because more data does not necessarily mean more information; that is, one piece of data can be enough to be a meaningful component of the analysis framework (Mason, 2010). Heppner, Wampold, and Kivlighan (2007) stated that no fixed number of samples is required for phenomenological study; however, they introduced the criteria that assess the sufficiency of the sample size.

Wertz (2005) stated about important considerations to determine sample size, such as “deliberation and critical reflection considering the research problem, the life-world position of the participants, the quality of the data, and the value of emergent findings with regard to research goals” (p. 271). Too small a sample could cause difficulty in terms of data saturation or theoretical saturation, which “occurs when all of the main variations of the phenomenon have been identified and incorporated into the emerging theory” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65), while too large a sample could complicate a profound and case-oriented analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

Relevant to the research approach for this study, Creswell (2007) stated researchers choose participants and sites for study as they can purposefully come to an understanding of the research topic and essential phenomenon in the study. It was recommended that the appropriate number of participants in phenomenological studies range from 3 to 10 individuals (Creswell, 2007), and all samples should satisfy some criterion (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Mason’s (2010) investigation of actual sample size in Ph.D studies using a qualitative approach ($N=560$) showed that all phenomenological research identified had a minimum of six participants. However, the

exact number of participants for this study was determined when data saturation was evident.

As succinctly stated by Starks and Trinidad (2007) with regard to determining sample sizes for phenomenological studies.

Although diverse samples might provide a broader range from which to distill the essence of the phenomenon, data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and who can provide a detailed account of their experience might suffice to uncover its core elements. Typical sample sizes for phenomenological studies range from 1 to 10 persons. (p. 1375)

As Charmaz (2006) suggested, this study targeted a specific group rather than a general group to achieve data saturation in a reasonable way; therefore, sample sizes of this study were not necessarily determined in an extensive way. In brief, reasonable sample sizes for this phenomenological study could be identified when participants' stories of their experiences were incorporated into the conceptual framework to form a theoretical framework of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea through an ordered data analysis process.

Data Collection

Qualitative research often depends on interviewing as the main data collection method (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Phenomenological researchers usually perform an extensive interview with each participant to gain a comprehensive description of the experience related to the phenomenon being studied. The interview process is comparatively unstructured but concentrates on eliciting the full range of the experience

(Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Creswell (2007) stated that data collection in phenomenological studies is composed of in-depth and multiple interviews with participants having all experienced the same phenomenon.

In a phenomenological study, the purpose of each interview is to elicit the participant's story. The researcher and participant suppose that their dialogue will be comprehended as spoken and intended (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). A qualitative research interview tries to discover both facts and meanings through interviews (Kvale, 1996). That is, the researcher should grasp underlying significant implications as well as the true-life events through the participant's narrative of experience.

Starks and Trinidad (2007) stated that a semi-structured interview design could function well for phenomenological studies. This sort of interview consists of a list of questions or specific topics to be discussed, frequently described as an interview guide; however, the interviewee retains flexibility in how they answer.

Interview questions may not precisely follow the manner outlined because the role of an interview guide is to provide a succinct list of memory prompts for the contents to be addressed in an interview. Interview questions that are not contained in the interview guide might be asked in response to interviewees' comments (Stark & Trinidad, 2007). If the researcher starts the study with an apparent focus rather than a general concept for research on a topic, a semi-structured interview is used so that more specific themes may also be addressed (Bryman, 2004).

Moustakas (1994) stated that the interviewer should initiate a phenomenological interview with a social chat or a short meditative activity intended to create a relaxed and

trusting mood. Therefore, I spent 20-30 minutes to establish rapport with my participants by chatting about usual topics that they feel comfortable discussing. A short history of their work lives and current tasks was included in this preliminary chat. The contents of the chat were not included in the transcript of the interview.

At the first stage of the regular interview process, demographic questions such as age, education, and occupation were used to identify participants' characteristics. Answers to demographic questions help the researcher locate the participant with respect to other people (Patton, 2002). In this study, some demographic questions that were relevant to the research topic were prepared, including personal information, length of career, type of work, position, and the number of organizational members.

Bryman (2004) suggested that values, beliefs, behavior, formal and informal roles, relationships, encounters, stories, and emotions of interviewees can be the basis of interview questions. Participants' stories, emotions, and behavior were the main points of the interview for this study. In the interview guide, the interview questions were classified into three topics, specifically about the experience of interpersonal workplace conflicts, personal impacts, and coping strategies according to the research questions, as Table 1 shows.

The interview questions were developed based on the kinds of questions typical of qualitative research, such as introductory questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct/indirect questions, structuring questions, silence, and interpretative questions. However, interviews could follow a somewhat looser format (Bryman, 2004).

Table 1

Interview Guide

Topics	Proposed Questions
Introductory questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your name? 2. How old are you? 3. What is your educational level? 4. What is your marital status? 5. How long have you been working? 6. What is your position in the organization? 7. What kind of tasks do you mainly do in your organization? 8. How many people are on your team or in your department? 9. Do you have experience(s) of interpersonal workplace conflicts with your current or former supervisor(s)?
Participants' experience of interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisor(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could you please describe your most outstanding experience(s) of conflict with your supervisor? 2. What do you think are the reason(s) why it occurred?
Personal impacts of interpersonal workplace conflicts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did you feel about that person's action, discourse or attitude in creating the conflict? 2. Did the conflict affect your work life? If so, how did it affect you? 3. How did this conflict change your work life? 4. How did the conflict influence your psychological states, such as motivation, attitude, or emotion related to work?
Participants' coping strategies for interpersonal workplace conflicts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did you cope with the conflict? Did you have specific strategies? 2. How did the social and cultural contexts of South Korea influence your ways of coping? 3. What do you think about reasonable ways of preventing and resolving interpersonal conflict at work?

According to Bryman (2004), an introducing question is kind of the initial point of the interview. Follow-up, probing, and specifying questions are used when a

researcher needs to elaborate interviewees' answers; but they were not included in the interview guide. A structuring question is used as an interviewer moves on to the next topic; therefore, it was asked at the end of each topic. The appropriate use of silence is the essential way to give an interviewee time to think about the question and bring a response. An interpretative question is for identifying the meaning of what interviewees say. A direct/indirect question concerns the method of asking questions.

Patton (2002) stated, "Quite simply, a probe is a follow-up question used to go deeper into the interviewee's responses" (p. 372). Using probes or follow-up questions is an important skill in qualitative research interviews. A probe is an interview tool for posing in-depth questions about the interview responses so that the richness of the data and comprehension of the phenomenon can be obtained (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

According to Patton (2002), there are four different kinds of probes in the interview process. Detail-oriented probes are about the 5W1H (When, Where, Who, What, Why, How) questions for gaining an inclusive and detailed portrait of the interviewee's experience. Elaboration probes, such as nonverbal head nodding or the verbal response "uh-huh" are used to encourage an interviewee to continue talking about a subject. A clarification probe is used when the participant's answer is ambiguous. The interviewer asks the interviewee to provide more information and contextualize or rephrase his or her response. The contrast probe is another kind of follow-up question to motivate interviewees to clarify information. The purpose of this question is to give participants something to push off against, for instance, "How does x contrast or compare to y ?" (Patton, 2002).

In this study, detail-oriented probes were applied mainly to secure the richness of the data concerning the stories of participants' experiences. Elaboration probes were needed to facilitate the interviewees' active sharing of their experiences, perception, or ideas. Use of a clarification probe was frequently necessary when the researcher could not completely understand what the participant says. The contrast probe seemed to have no useful function in this research.

All interviews in this study were performed through Skype telephone, an Internet-based communication. Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) compared face-to-face interviewing approach with telephone interviewing method in a qualitative research and found there were no significant differences in terms of results. Though face-to-face interviewing is seen as a typical method of data collection in a qualitative study, telephone interviewing can be used effectively too. Telephone interviewing is beneficial in case that a study contains a sensitive topic so anonymity is important. In addition, "telephone interviewing may provide an opportunity to obtain data from potential participants who are reluctant to participate in face-to-face interviews or from groups who are otherwise difficult to access in person" (p. 109). Besides, interviewing through telephone is cost-effective way of collecting data (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004).

Participation in the study on interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships could be sensitive for workers within collectivistic culture. In addition, some people might be shy with face-to-face communicating. Therefore, telephone interviewing was advantageous with regard to reducing a burden of participation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of preparing and organizing data. Researchers categorize data into themes by coding, and then the codes are condensed. The data are finally represented in figures, tables, or as a discussion (Creswell, 2007).

Maxwell (2005) stated that the initial step in qualitative analysis is to read interview transcripts that are written records of completed interviews produced from a recording device. In this study, no audio recordings were made; instead, direct transcription in Korean was performed during interviews. Because all interviews were done through Skype telephone, an Internet communication service, good quality in audio recording could not be expected. For the direct transcription, I asked the interviewees to speak a little bit slowly and to give a few seconds after they said a sentence. What was said was keyed directly into a Korean language Word document, using Korean keyboard. This was possible due to the skill of the researcher and provided the basic process of preparing data for coding in this qualitative study.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), a common strategy used for categorization in qualitative research is coding. Coding data is the formal indication of analytic thoughts to identify categories and themes. The researcher marks passages in the data continuously and carefully by using specific codes. The forms of codes are various, for example, abbreviated key words, colored dots, or numbers (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Phenomenological data analyses share some basic activities: (a) synopses of individual research participant's experiences, (b) assessment of the context and setting

where these experiences happened, and (c) reduction or summary of main themes with related excerpts from interviews (Padgett, 2008).

Based on Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), the first step in analyzing data is to extract relevant texts that are related to the research subject from the whole texts. The remaining texts are discarded. The same or similar expressions of words and phrases for the same concept is called repeating ideas. Finding repeating ideas follows extracting relevant texts. Next, repeating ideas are grouped into themes that refer to implicit topics that consist of organized repeating ideas. In addition, the gathering of themes forms theoretical constructs. Finally, a theoretical narrative that relates what a researcher learned about the research topic can be created. It plays a role as a connector between research concerns and the participants' experiences. That is, it is the process of synthesizing the participants' subjective stories and the abstract concepts in the theoretical framework (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Moustakas (1994) suggested a similar data analysis process: "Listing and grouping; reduction and eliminating; labeling; clustering and thematizing; finalizing; validating; constructing of an individual structural description; constructing textural-structural descriptions for each participant; compositing descriptions of meanings and essences representing the group as a whole including the researcher" (p. 120). According to Merriam (2009), findings are derived "in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories that cut across the data, or in the form of models and theories that explain the data" (p. 176).

According to Ruona (2005), four stages for qualitative data analysis were suggested: (a) data preparation, (b) familiarization, (c) coding, and (d) generating meaning. First, data preparation is the process of organizing data, including minor editing and formatting. This process allows a researcher to manage data efficiently throughout the research. Second, familiarization means the repeated reading and writing of notes to obtain a general sense of the collected data and to reflect on overall meaning in the data. Third, coding is the process of reduction, categorization, and finally, conceptualization of data. Categories in the coding process are the answers to the research questions. Last, generating meaning is derived from interpretation of the data; that is, a researcher needs to focus on generalizing and theorizing. With regard to the theorizing process, Ruona (2005) said,

Your aim is to engage in the creative and intellectual work of exploring how the themes that have emerged are connected to each other as well as how they may be connected to ideas you have, the literature, prior research, and so on. (p. 245)

In this research, the first step was to arrange the collected data into the same format and to correct grammatical errors in phrases and sentences. Microsoft Word 2007, a word processing program, was used to edit and arrange the data. Second, the sentences that were directly related to the subject of this study were picked out from the raw data. The next step was to identify common ideas from selected texts through coding that labeled overlapping words and phrases, using the comment and tracking functions in Word 2007. The coded data were integrated into the more comprehensive concepts, so-called categorization. In the categorization process, themes, categories, and

subcategories emerged to answer the research questions of this study. Finally, these concepts were synthesized with the conceptual framework to create a description of meanings with interpretations. The concept map of the phenomenon was presented for easy understanding.

Validity

To enhance the validity of this study, I used four strategies: (a) bracketing, (b) member checking, (c) rich data, and (c) triangulation. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, “Two important threats to the validity of qualitative conclusions are the selection of data that fit the researcher’s existing theory or preconceptions and the selection of data that stand out to the researcher” (p. 263). In phenomenological studies, bracketing is necessarily used to minimize researchers’ preconceived ideas. Creswell (2007) described bracketing as an important way to validate “in which researchers set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (p. 59). Willis (2001) stated, “Bracketing refers to the process of standing apart from one’s usual ways of conceiving the world and the things in it, and attempting to intuit the things, the subject of interest, the phenomenon, directly in an unmediated way” (p. 10). According to Bednall (2006), bracketing is a kind of reintegration that joins both the researcher’s experiences and the units of meaning in the data together. With the reintegrated data, researchers make an interpretation for a larger investigation.

Moustakas (1994) recommended that a researcher sends participants copies of the synthesized data after initial analysis and requires them to inspect the description

for additions and corrections in terms of validation. In this member checking, misunderstood parts can be adjusted and fixed. Participants are engaged to ensure their realities coincide with the researcher's transcriptions (Cho & Trent, 2006). Similar to member checking, respondent validation, a systematic request for feedback from participants about the data and conclusions, can be employed. In this study, the transcriptions were sent to the interviewees for their review. After data analysis, the findings of this study were also sent to the participants to get their feedback.

Rich data is also an important factor of validation, which requires long-term participation and intensive interviews for collecting detailed and varied data. Rich data gives researchers full and revealing aspects of the phenomenon (Maxwell, 2005). In this study, each participant spent more than two hours doing interviews, including the follow-up work of reviewing transcripts and initial analysis. Through interviews, the participants shared their experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts including examples.

Triangulation in qualitative research means “the use of multiple and different methods, investigators, sources, and theories to obtain corroborating evidence” (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 239). For the validity of this study, I employed triangulation with multiple reviewers, data, and relevant theories.

I asked my academic supervisor to comment on the findings to get alternative views (Ruona, 2005); therefore, I could reflect on what reviewers commented upon. In addition, this study had six different participants, and they were diverse in terms of personal background factors, such as gender, length of career, workplace, and type of

occupation. Thus, each person provided me with diverse stories of their experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships, reflecting different points of view. Regarding the theoretical aspect, I reviewed various theories and concepts to create a conceptual framework to guide this study. Additionally, the concept map from the findings was presented with multiple supporting references from the literature.

Researcher Bias and Assumptions

My assumptions with regard to this study had a possibility of affecting research findings; therefore, verifying my assumptions was beneficial to minimize the influence of my bias on the results of the study. As the conceptual framework in the introduction chapter showed, I had three assumptions concerning the topic of this study.

The first assumption was that social and cultural contexts are very influential on organizations and individuals in a society; therefore, all social phenomena occur only in a specific social and cultural frame. In this study, the context of South Korean society was at the center of the process with regard to interpersonal workplace conflict. Specifically, collectivism as a cultural orientation and Confucianism as a traditional background of South Korea were highlighted as distinctive social contexts.

The second assumption was that the influence of interpersonal workplace conflicts on younger generation workers is likely to be negative rather than positive in South Korean organizations. This assumption was based on my previous work experience, indirect experience of conflicts through other persons' stories, and mass media, such as newspapers and journals.

The last assumption was that interpersonal workplace conflicts influence younger generation workers more than older generation supervisors in terms of psychological state; therefore, outcomes of interpersonal conflicts were expected to be obvious in the younger worker group. This difference exists because younger workers are in a relatively lower position, so they have less authority than their supervisors, who are generally older and have more power in the organization. This tendency would likely be much stronger in the South Korean workplaces than in other countries because of South Korea's strict seniority system. In other words, relatively inexperienced young workers who are not in managerial positions have a higher possibility of being exposed to unfair situations in the workplace. What is worse, an attempt to overcome unreasonable situations in supervisor-subordinate relationships is usually very difficult and disadvantageous to younger workers in the collectivistic culture of South Korea because maintaining social harmony is a priority in collectivism; therefore, individual differences and demands are regarded as relatively less important factors.

Translation Issues

Translation issues were important in this study because such complications could significantly influence the data collection and analysis processes. Selected portions of data as well as the analysis of data were translated into English. This included the quotes that were provided in Chapter 4 and 5. This study's researcher performed translation with the assistance of a bilingual translator. This practice enhanced validity and assisted with understanding the meaning of key words and phrases. An American editor checked the translated document again, as he focused on grammar and word choices.

Related to the validity of translation, Temple and Young (2004) stated, “Translators must constantly make decisions about the cultural meanings which language carries, and evaluate the degree to which the two different worlds they inhabit are the same” (p. 165). Temple and Moran (2006) emphasized the role of language in conceptualization through incorporating values and beliefs. They stated, “It carries accumulated and particular cultural, social and political meanings that cannot simply be read off through the process of translation, and organizes and prepares the experiences of its speaker” (p. 41). In this study, keeping the original data in Korean and translating only selected parts of interview data and the results of data analysis into English was helpful in terms of preserving original meanings that South Korean interviewees intended. Such partial translation method has been used in other qualitative dissertations (e.g. Kim, 2008; Ryu, 2008) that chose South Koreans as their research participants.

Chapter Summary

This method chapter discussed the process and strategies for exploring younger generation white-collar workers’ experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. The contents of this chapter included a discussion of the design of the study, sample selection, data collection, data analysis, validity, researcher bias and assumptions, and translation issues. For this phenomenological study, a qualitative research design was adopted. The samples were purposefully selected by criterion-based, homogenous, and snowball/chain referral psampling methods. The number of participants in this study was six. Data were collected through interviews using Skype, an Internet communication service, using the

interview guide. Collected data were analyzed by data preparation, coding, categorizing, and synthesizing using the conceptual framework. Validity of the study was enhanced through various strategies, such as bracketing, member checking, rich data, and triangulation. In Chapter 4, the results of this study based on data analysis are provided.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

In this chapter, information concerning: (a) profiles of the participants, (b) findings from data analysis, and (c) the conceptual map are provided. Included are details of the results of this study based on the interview data reflecting interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by younger generation South Korean white-collar workers with their supervisors.

Profiles of the Participants

In this study, six people participated in interviews, and they all met the following requirements for the purpose of this study: (a) all participants were native South Koreans; (b) all were white-collar workers in staff or deputy manager positions and were members of younger generation, meaning they were born after 1976; (c) they all had experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors; and (d) they were able to orally articulate their experiences. These criteria for selecting participants were purposefully determined to investigate the specific experiences regarding interpersonal workplace conflicts in South Korea. These specifications were based on the technique of purposeful sampling in qualitative research. Disclosure of participants' personal information was minimized to protect their privacy. Some participants particularly required confidentiality and anonymity before doing an interview. Table 2 shows brief profiles of the participants.

Table 2

Participants' Profiles

Person	Marital Status	Gender	Age	Educational Level	Type of Work	Length of Career
Yong	Unmarried	Male	Early 30s	M.A.	Worker at a university	2 years
Chang	Unmarried	Male	Early 30s	B.A.	Worker at a large corporation	5 years
Min	Unmarried	Female	Mid 30s	M.A.	Worker in the mass media industry	7 years
Won	Unmarried	Female	Early 30s	M.A.	Staff (white-collar worker) at a higher educational institute	5 years
Kyeong	Unmarried	Female	Mid 30s	M.A.	Researcher at a university	4 years
Hyeon	Married	Male	Early 30s	M.A.	Worker at a large corporation	3 years

Yong

Yong is an unmarried male white-collar worker at a public university in Seoul, South Korea. He is in his early 30s. His main task is to administer the college admissions process. He acquired his M.A. degree before starting his current position. He has worked for about two years. Fifteen people are on his team. His workplace has a unique bureaucratic system that includes the local government of Seoul, the board of directors of the school foundation, and the university administration system. Given this organizational structure, there is the potential for workplace conflicts to arise due to the complexity of the bureaucracy. According to his verbal comments, his organization's multilevel decision-making system creates complex conflicts in the work process. Yong

said he has continually intended to quit his job and wants to pursue a doctoral degree. He has multiple supervisors and all his supervisors are male and in their 50s.

Chang

Chang is an unmarried male white-collar worker at a large corporation in Seoul, South Korea. He is in his early 30s. He started working just after finishing his undergraduate degree and he has been in his career for about five years. He is in charge of planning and developing new products. Eight people are on his team. His workplace is typically hierarchical because of its large scale. In South Korea, large-scale corporations mostly have strict hierarchical systems so that prompt decision making can occur. Therefore, the possibility of interpersonal conflicts always exists, especially in supervisor-subordinate relationships. As Chang pointed out, the very rigid collectivism that serves as a social frame in South Korea is dominant in the organization; therefore, organizational culture is largely affected by collectivistic ways of thinking and behaving. He mainly discussed “*Hwi-shik*” culture, a congregate dining with drinking after work, as a representative event in South Korean organizations. His supervisor is a male in his late 40s.

Min

Min is an unmarried female white-collar worker in the mass media industry in Seoul, South Korea. She is in her mid 30s and has been in her career for about seven years. She acquired her M.A. degree before the start of her career. She is mainly involved in television program planning and producing. There are about fifty people in her department; therefore, interpersonal relationships are very dynamic and complex.

According to her comments, she experienced conflicts with her supervisor, which caused resentment in some of her colleagues on the team because they did not want situations that could interfere with organizational harmony. She mentioned that her colleagues' reaction was mainly due to their desire to avoid troublesome situations and an interest in having continued stability in the workplace. Her supervisor is male and in his 50s.

Won

Won is an unmarried female practitioner of educational programs at a higher education setting in Seoul, South Korea. She acquired her Master's degree and has worked for about five years since her graduation. She is in her early 30s. She has been in charge of developing, performing, and assessing educational programs. Ten people work with her on the team. Her main point with regard to workplace conflicts is a problem in communication in the work process. Her supervisor is female and in her late 40s.

Kyeong

Kyeong is female and a former researcher at a university in Seoul, South Korea. She is in her mid 30s and has been in her career about four years. She has an M.A. degree. She experienced a workplace transfer due to conflicts with her former supervisor. Forced overtime work and unfair work assignment by her former supervisor were the main reasons for workplace conflicts. She now works as a research fellow at a national research institute in Seoul, South Korea. She was concerned about confidentiality and anonymity. Therefore, I informed her of the guidelines for research

ethics concerning this study and its approval by the IRB at the University of Georgia.

Her supervisor is also female and in her late 40s.

Hyeon

Hyeon is a married male white-collar worker in a large corporation in Seoul, South Korea. He is in his early 30s. He has an M.A. degree and about three years of career experience. His main tasks are to create and implement training programs for employees. On his team, there are nine people including one supervisor and eight staff members. He in particular required confidentiality and anonymity because of his feeling that participating in this study might prove to be burden; however, he willingly consented to give an interview, saying he wanted to share his experiences and improve the negative aspects in South Korean workplaces. His supervisor is female and in her late 40s.

Findings

For qualitative research, Merriam (2009) stated that, “Findings can be in the form of organized descriptive accounts, themes, or categories that cut across the data or in the form of models and theories that explain the data” (p. 176). In this chapter, the following three parts were presented: (a) themes, categories, and subcategories from the data analysis; (b) descriptive accounts for each theme and category; and (c) a concep map of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea from the points of view of younger generation white-collar workers.

Table 3 shows the overview of the findings of this study, including research questions, themes, categories, and subcategories derived from the data analysis. These findings formed a concept map. Each theme reflected research questions for achieving

the purpose of this study. The consentaneity between research questions and findings was important; that is, the process to analyze data was for answering research questions (Merriam, 2009).

Table 3

Overview of the Findings

Research Questions	Themes	Categories	Subcategories
(a) What experiences do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers have with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors?	Experiences of conflicts according to causal dimensions	Supervisor's personal problems Problems in the work process Social and cultural factors	(a) Ineffective communication (b) Abusive supervision (c) Professional incompetence (a) The absence of job autonomy (b) Perceived unfairness about work assignments (c) Quantity and result-centered performance appraisal (a) Hierarchy and authoritarianism (b) Collectivism (c) Confucianism
(b) What personal impacts do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experience from interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors?	Personal impacts	Psychological and emotional distress Decreased work efficiency Negative influence upon personal relationships	
(c) In what ways do younger generation white-collar workers cope with interpersonal workplace conflicts within given social/cultural contexts of South Korea?	Coping strategies	Aversive coping Reluctant adaptation	

Interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors experienced by younger generation South Korean white-collar workers

This theme related to the first research question regarding participants' outstanding experiences of interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors at work. According to the results of data analysis, younger generation South Korean white-collar workers' experiences of the conflicts were divided into three categories according to causal dimensions: (a) conflicts due to supervisor's personal problems, (b) conflicts due to problems in the work process, and (c) conflicts due to social and cultural factors. This categorization was created according to the attribute of each subcategory.

Conflicts due to supervisors' personal problems. Supervisors' personal factors influenced the occurrence of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. This category had three subcategories: (a) supervisor's ineffective communication, (b) abusive supervision, and (c) supervisors' professional incompetence.

First, the participants viewed ineffective communication by supervisors as an important factor with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts between supervisors and subordinates. Discussing the top leader's unilateral and oppressive ways of communication at work, Yong said, "The top leader especially never listens to anyone's opinions. He has no desire to accept subordinates' ideas about the work process. He forces the organizational members to follow his decisions one-sidedly."

Min had an opinion similar to Yong's view of his supervisor's communication styles. Min said, "My supervisor never tries to communicate well. Communication is

supposed to be mutual; however, the supervisor has a totally different concept of communication because he thinks that subordinates should obey his orders unconditionally.”

Won pointed out her supervisor’s top-down style of communication that is based on the supervisor’s concept of the relationship between herself and her subordinates:

Sometimes, different views about the work process occur because my supervisor just gives orders without any discussion before work starts. Fundamentally, the fellowship that is based on mutual respect and trust is too weak between younger subordinates and their older supervisors.

Won provided an example of her supervisor’s communication style that causes difficulties in resolving problems at work:

I feel despair, as though I am talking to a wall when my supervisor does not listen to my opinions at all. I think it is reasonable to narrow the difference of opinions in the work process, but my supervisor never has a desire to communicate.

Therefore, most problems cannot be resolved and continuously remain. For example, my supervisor said, “Don’t say anything!”, “That is none of your business.” How can I communicate with a supervisor who says that?

Kyeong said communication between the supervisor and subordinates in her workplace consists of admonitions and orders and is completely one-way. The supervisor’s high-handed attitude in the work process was shown by an example:

I felt so uneasy about my supervisor’s practice of not listening to others’ opinions and just saying her own thoughts. Communication should not be unilateral.

However, all communication between supervisor and subordinates is filled with the supervisor's admonitions and orders in my workplace. For example, I think she could address me in a softer way, such as "How about approaching a problem in this way?" or "In my opinion, this way looks good too. What do you think?" However, she always damages subordinates' self-respect by addressing them with sarcastic remarks, such as "Don't do your work like this"; or "Why didn't you deal with this task well?" These kinds of directive remarks create rebellious attitudes for subordinates.

Hyeon stated his supervisor's inability to communicate with subordinates is a factor in the occurrence of interpersonal workplace conflicts. The supervisor's insincere attitude in listening to what subordinates say and unilateral style of speaking were considered negative aspects of workplace communication:

In my point of view, the most serious problem might be the lack of communication ability in my supervisor. Her ways of speaking are so terrible. She never listens to what other people say. She always says her own words, in one-way communication. In my opinion, she doesn't have an appropriate attitude for conversations with subordinates. I really don't know why she acts like that.

Taken as a whole, there was a common characteristic in what the participants said; that is, supervisors' ineffective ways of communicating with subordinates, such as inattentive listening, self-righteous attitude, and one-way communication, were derived from their authoritarian attitudes. As a result, supervisors tended to consider their subordinates the object of control.

Next, supervisor's inappropriate attitudes and behaviors at work, so-called abusive supervision, emerged as a factor that negatively influences supervisor-subordinates relationships, so interpersonal workplace conflicts could occur. Yong talked about his experience of receiving improper and disparaging remarks from his supervisor about his appearance:

In my early stage of employment, I often received personal insults from my supervisor, such as "Your hairstyle is not neat"; "I don't like the color of your clothes"; and "I don't like your appearance."

Yong also revealed his views on the older supervisors' coercive attitudes in the work process:

My supervisors often created tension by regularly keeping a close watch on every move that their subordinates made. Supervisors' repeated scolding caused my self-respect to decrease. I tried to adapt to the supervisor for survival after I understood the organizational culture. Making such changes was the only way I could keep my self-respect.

In his interview, Yong described supervisors' inappropriate behaviors and attitudes that frustrated subordinates' creative thinking and positive work attitude:

Supervisors never try to form original or creative ideas; they just follow established organizational goals. Even though I formed useful, creative ideas, my supervisors intercepted my ideas and made them over as their own accomplishments. As a result, I have not tried to do my best and have maintained a passive work attitude since I experienced such an unreasonable situation.

Min discussed her supervisor's excessive use of his organizational status to require subordinates to sacrifice their private time:

I want to protect my private time, but my supervisor freely encroaches on my free time and takes the sacrifice of my free time for granted because he is in the higher position. What is much harder is that most people in the department follow the supervisor's unreasonable thoughts even though they know it is wrong. However, they also criticize the supervisor behind his back. The supervisor who makes trouble is a serious problem, but, at the same time, subordinates who dwell upon the subject matter of the complaint also create an inappropriate organizational culture. This trend derives from South Korea's own tradition of workplace culture.

Min's experience of confronting her supervisor's very aggressive and intentional behaviors clearly illustrates situations that aggravate workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships:

My supervisor criticizes me intentionally when all team members are together. He has also thrown things at the team members to reveal his annoyance due to conflicts with me which makes for a very bad atmosphere. His behavior made me uncomfortable because other people were damaged by conflicts between the supervisor and me. He revealed his temper in many ways, such as saying "You guys ignore me? I look like negligible?" with some insults. In addition, he called an urgent meeting that was intended to expand the conflict to the entire group.

His behavior made me more uncomfortable and caused the conflict to become worse.

The following example from Min shows how her supervisor deliberately attempted to make trouble for her. Min said, “He deliberately pretended not to know that I worked alone; that is, he looked on with folded arms and never tried to help me. The supervisor also seemed to avoid the conflict with me.”

Kyeong pointed out her supervisor’s self-centered behaviors as a cause of interpersonal conflicts. The core of this factor was the supervisor’s inconsistent attitudes with regard to the handling and responsibility for tasks between herself and her subordinates:

In the case of not completing tasks until the deadline, it is natural that all team members take the responsibility for it. However, my supervisor always tried to pass all responsibility to the subordinates with a clumsy excuse, even though she did not finish her allotted tasks. She is always a nagging person, saying “Why are you guys too slow to complete tasks?”, “Why do you guys understand so little about your own tasks?” But she is very generous to herself.

Another aspect of the supervisor’s self-centered behavior, unfairness in the work assignment between supervisor and subordinates, was also mentioned in Kyeong’s interview:

Not all tasks are professional and advanced. There are also many chores, such as simple typing, physical work, and so on. Sometimes, I think, “Why I am doing these kinds of chores?” But chores are also necessary in the work process.

However, my supervisor never does chores. The subordinates do chores but not because they want to.

Hyeon discussed the supervisor's unreasonable view of her subordinates. The participant's colleagues also had similar experiences in the workplace in terms of the supervisor's lack of regard for them:

She never thought I am a person who actually works with her. For her, there's only her in terms of work because she is always concerned about her own achievements. Team members' ideas are not important for her. When I hear her talk, I can feel what she thinks about the subordinates who work with her. She looks rudely at every subordinate while she is extremely polite to the person who is in higher position; her attitude depends completely on the other person's status in the organization or their social influence. This is a common opinion among all of the companies in my team. They said they also have had similar experiences. Someone even said that the supervisor told her to quit because she simply opposed the supervisor's thoughts.

Hyeon speaking figuratively, said, "She never respects anyone except the chief of my organization. Interestingly, she seems to be a tame rabbit around her boss, but she is a lion around me". The supervisor's overestimation of her own work abilities and the abuse of her status in the work process were pointed out as important factors in the conflicts with subordinates:

She said "I want my team members to follow what I intend. There should not be any objections to my orders. I have much more experience than all of you. So I

have enough ability to deal with any situations that may occur in this field.”

When I heard her saying that, I just laughed in blank dismay. She is an extremely self-centered person. In other words, she overestimates herself, and she demoralizes other people.

Younger subordinates' perceived traits and behaviors of their supervisors, such as personal insults, coercive attitudes, repeated scolding, senseless actions, intentional harmful behaviors, unfairness in the work process, and self-centered and rude attitudes, as having some common aspects. That is, supervisors' inconsiderate and aggressive tendencies were the main causes of abusive supervision and the outcome is inappropriate attitudes and behaviors.

One additional theme that emerged was that supervisor's professional incompetence was regarded as a factor in the occurrence of interpersonal workplace conflicts from the viewpoint of younger generation workers. Min stated that her supervisor often neglected his responsibilities to support subordinates' tasks and cooperate with other departments in the work process. In addition, the supervisor did not assess his own work carefully enough so he put pressure on subordinates to spend extra hours at work, resulting in a sacrifice of private time:

My supervisor neglects his duties to support team members' tasks. There are many tasks that need other departments' cooperation and it is the supervisor's duty to communicate with them. But, the supervisor does not communicate smoothly, which causes inconvenience for the subordinates. I don't think he

properly understands his tasks. In addition, he wants the subordinates to spend their private time to do his work.

Leadership-related aspects of the supervisor were also described as one of the perceived areas of incompetence in Min's view. Min succinctly stated, "My supervisor never suggests an organizational vision and motivates subordinates to work. In short, he looks incompetent."

Won pointed out the supervisor's excessive performance-driven tendency that neglected quality in the work process and showed a dependent attitude:

My supervisor is concerned just about the beginning and results of work. She does not give enough feedback and communication throughout the process. In other words, she has performance-driven thoughts that affect subordinates.

However, she totally depends on the subordinates and never works hard in spite of the high performance standards that she places on the subordinates.

Won also described the supervisor as a glib talker, saying, "My supervisor's all talk and no action, which always displeases me."

Kyeong also has had a similar experience with regard to supervisor's incompetence. Kyeong said, "I felt it was unreasonable that my supervisor forced subordinates to finish tasks within a very short period of time and pressured people into creating new work ideas even though she never tried to develop an idea."

Hyeon pointed out his supervisor's incompetence with an example:

Actually, my supervisor seems not to have enough ability to comprehend each subordinate's work situations, such as workload, required resources, and

timeframe. For example, she never tries to know exact budget amounts when a new project is planned. In addition, she always attempts too much exceeding the team's ability. If she wants to achieve what she plans, more than three times as many as people might be required than what we have now.

Essentially, the core of perceived incompetence of supervisors by younger subordinates was the lack of the ability to understand the overall aspects of work that team members do. In other words, younger workers were likely to experience dissatisfaction with supervisors' unreasonable demands that go beyond the team's abilities and organizational supports.

Conflicts due to problems in the work process. Negative factors in the work process caused interpersonal workplace conflicts. Issues in the work process, such as (a) the absence of job autonomy, (b) perceived unfairness in work assignments, and (c) quantity and result-centered performance appraisal, were involved in conflicts in subordinate-subordinate relationships in South Korean workplaces.

Yong stated he has never had the experience of job autonomy because of supervisors' dominant influence and power in the workplace. Furthermore, subordinates' endeavors to generate good ideas related to the work are never reflected by supervisors, which impacts negatively on active and responsible work attitudes of subordinates. Yong said, "Because the work process has no self-regulated aspects, a sense of direction toward work responsibilities is impossible to maintain. Who would work hard in this kind of organization?"

In Yong's view, supervisors' excessive concern about details in the work process is also unhelpful in creating a sense of initiative in subordinates. Yong said, "Sometimes, the supervisor requires us to follow a very detailed work process, which prevents the staff from feeling a sense of initiative to do their work."

Won, Kyeong, Hyeon commonly stated that excessive workloads and dissatisfaction with given tasks induce interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors. For example, Won mentioned, "Workplace conflicts occur when my supervisor does little work of poor quality and imposes large quantities of hard work on subordinates." Hyeon gave an example of his supervisors' unfair behavior:

I think that my supervisor never does her tasks dutifully. She cannot concentrate on her given tasks because she always does other kinds of work, such as personal things that are just for her own achievement. As a result, subordinates frequently assume too much of the team's work because of the supervisor's selfish behaviors.

Kyeong stated that unfairness in the process of allocating given tasks occurs due to a supervisor's lack of understanding of the entire team members' work. Unlike unfairness between supervisors and subordinates, Kyeong's story is about perceived unfairness of work allocation among subordinates caused by her supervisor:

Work assignment is a supervisor's duty; therefore, unreasonable work allocation can cause workplace conflicts. My supervisor only considers the quantity of tasks, not the quality. As a result, the amount of work each subordinate should do looks the same even though the actual amount of work is very different in terms

of quality. Unfair work assignment can cause workplace conflicts among subordinates. Therefore, it is important for supervisors to know about subordinates' tasks accurately in order to understand the actual demands that are placed on subordinates. After all, subordinates attribute unfair work allocation to their supervisor.

In Won's view, the supervisor's quantity-centered and result-centered ways of thinking about the work distort performance appraisals, preventing objective and accurate review. Won said,

My supervisor never checks on the work process and only focuses on the beginning and results of work; therefore, problems can occur later on. After all, the supervisor tends to evaluate subordinates only by the results of their work without giving consideration to the process; that is, quantitative assessment is extremely important to the supervisor.

Won pointed out the tendency of the supervisor regarding the results of the work is linked to organizational practice in South Korea. Won said, "Performance appraisal is mainly done quantitatively and seldom considers the quality of the work process in many Korean organizations. Therefore, supervisors show a tendency to focus excessively on quantitative aspects of job performance."

This causal dimension of conflicts category, problems in the work process, could be summarized as features in the work process that reduce subordinates' motivation. Additionally, supervisors' behaviors as leaders clearly influenced subordinates' work motivation.

Conflicts due to social and cultural factors. Social and cultural factors largely affected conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. These factors included comprehensive concepts, such as authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism as well as more culturally-specific characteristics, such as “*Hwi-shik*” culture referring to congregate dining with drinking after work.

According to the interviews, social and cultural aspects of South Korea emerged as significant reasons for interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. Social and cultural aspects that influenced workplace conflicts included: (a) hierarchy and authoritarianism, (b) collectivism, and (c) Confucianism.

First, hierarchy and authoritarianism emerged as prevailing social contexts that influence South Korean organizations. Communication between supervisors and subordinates is negatively affected by rigidity of relationships. A top-down style of communication in the work process was established due to concentrated authority in supervisors. Younger generation workers perceived this inflexible organizational feature as a trigger for interpersonal workplace conflicts.

Yong stated that hierarchical organization and authoritarian supervisors were negative factors obstructing communication among organizational members. He said, “Staff members communicate with each other only through Internet chatting because the organizational atmosphere is too stiff. People never talk to each other in open places because they constantly feel they are under surveillance by their supervisors.” In addition, supervisors have no flexible goal setting because of the hierarchical structure of the organization. He said, “Even if each team has their own flexible goals, supervisors

always pay careful attention only to the superior organizations and their leaders.” This remark reflects a context that is similar to the one described by Won that exists when a supervisor gives orders without any discussion when there are different views about the work process. Also, Won’s view about result-centered organizational atmosphere is related to the appearance of supervisors’ excessive achievement-oriented attitudes including authoritarianism.

Kyeong considered the hierarchical aspect, which leads to placing excessive importance on the roles of the supervisors, a problem. She said, “The role of supervisors is considered as the most important factor in the workplace just because of their higher positions. This is a problem.”

Hyeon mainly focused on his supervisor’s authoritarian behaviors. In particular, the supervisor’s dogmatic behavior in the work process is shown as an example:

She has an extreme air of authority. She is very strange. I can’t understand why she is so authoritarian. She always orders me like she is a military officer. I can’t understand why she has such stiff thoughts and words. I think there’s no one who is so authoritarian with such a one-sided attitude. A mindset like that is a very serious problem when it comes to the work process. I believe supervisors should give an account of the task to their team members before implementation. For example, it would be essential to discuss and generate various ideas when we invent a new educational program. If the supervisor decides all the things alone, why are other team members besides her needed?...Work procedure without any explanation is an unreasonable requirement for workers. Even in the army, there

are explanations before any operation. She said, “Why should I get your agreement?” That remark is a symbolic expression that reflects her thoughts related to work. She thinks she has all the power to control work and even others. But, no one will accept that kind of attitude.

Hyeon’s statement linked the hierarchical and authoritarian culture of South Korean organizations to work efficiency in connection with communication and cooperation:

As long as Korea’s social context does not change, individuals’ endeavors to prevent and resolve interpersonal workplace conflicts will be limited. Individuals are strongly affected by social contexts that include authoritarianism and hierarchical culture...Too many organizations in Korea maintain vertical relationships between supervisors and subordinates that are too rigid. I think horizontal relationships to some degree would be more effective for the support of communication and cooperation in the work process.

Next, participants pointed out that the collectivistic culture of South Korea acted as a cause of conflicts in supervisor-supervisor relationships. In particular, *Hwi-shik*, dining with drinking after work, was a distinctive culture in South Korean organizations. In the interviews, participants described *Hwi-shik* as the representative collectivistic aspect that affects interpersonal workplace conflicts.

According to Yong’s interview, *Hwi-shik* negatively affects communication in the organization because *Hwi-shik* is often used to convey supervisors’ own thoughts to subordinates. Yong commented,

Hwi-shik is a frequent event in Korean organizations. Formally, it is for communication among organizational members, but the consequences are never very good. Supervisors make use of *Hwi-shik* to convey their own opinions again. Though supervisors pretend to hear subordinates' difficulties, they really want subordinates to follow their own thoughts in the end. Therefore, subordinates never tell them about work related issues, difficulties, or ideas. However, on the surface, my team might look like a team with good conviviality and unity.

Chang gave a detailed account of *Hwi-shik* that is based on his experiences. He described *Hwi-shik* as a forced and unreasonable event:

Most Korean organizations have the *Hwi-shik* culture with the justification that it enhances team spirit. Workers cannot avoid participating in *Hwi-shik*, spending their own private time. Mostly, *Hwi-shik* includes drinking and eating dinner regardless of personal preference, that is, a certain kind of meal is selected by a supervisor or the majority. This is an outstanding example of Korean collectivism. *Hwi-shik* occurs at least once per week and lasts about five to six hours. Generally, *Hwi-shik* consist of eating dinner at the first stage, more eating combined with drinking at the next stage, and drinking at the last stage. I think this is forced team spirit enhancement.

Similar to what Yong said, Chang also stated that communication in *Hwi-shik* is not smooth and is done in uncomfortable vertical relationships between a supervisor and subordinates:

I think *Hwi-shik* was originally a kind of activity for revitalization; therefore, it needs to occur in a comfortable atmosphere and according to personal choice of participation. However, the rigid vertical supervisor-subordinate relationship is continued in *Hwi-shik* and participation is forced.

Chang pointed out that *Hwi-shik* is the outstanding organizational culture that mirrors the strong collectivism in South Korea. He expressed, “*Hwi-shik* forces a collectivistic organizational culture in which personal choice and opinion are easily ignored.” He also mentioned the problem with *Hwi-shik* with regard to the sacrifice of personal life. He said, “The sacrifice of personal life is considered necessary for enhancing team spirit and work abilities in the organization.”

Chang’s example clearly illustrated the collectivism in the corporation. He said, “For example, attending organizational members’ family events such as a weddings and funerals is compulsory in a collectivistic workplace culture, regardless of personal intimacy.”

The difficulty of improving supervisor’s behavioral problems was revealed through Min’s statement about passive attitudes that her colleagues had:

Most people never try to raise a question about a supervisor’s unreasonable behavior by themselves. Male workers are far more passive than female workers in conflict situations at work because they are very concerned about keeping their job as a means of making a living. Sometimes they advise me not to raise questions at work. Because of such situations, it is hard to improve supervisors’ inappropriate behaviors and attitudes.

Won pointed out that interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationship were hard to resolve because of the collectivistic culture that regarded interpersonal conflict as a social taboo. Won stated as follows:

It would be hard to change this fixed organizational culture. Subordinates cannot do anything about the workplace problem until the supervisor who causes most workplace problems quits. Either a supervisor or subordinate needs to quit in order for conflicts to be resolved. Actually, most people never try to resolve workplace conflicts within Korea's cultural context which holds that interpersonal workplace conflicts are taboo.

Hyeon's story of observing his colleagues' quitting their jobs due to conflicts with the supervisor reflected a similar social context to that which Min and Kyeong described:

I have observed three of my colleagues quit their job because of conflicts with my supervisor. It was a really stressful situation because it could be my situation, too. When workplace conflicts occur in supervisor-subordinate relationships, those situations are far more unfavorable to younger subordinates than supervisors because of the difference of organizational status.

Last, younger generation workers pointed out the age context as an outstanding element in Confucian tradition in South Korea. The so-called "elders first" culture, which gives precedence to those who are older exists and is influential in South Korean workplaces.

Chang pointed out, "Korea's seniority system makes supervisors want to make the best use of authority to control subordinates, even outside of the workplace." Won also

stated, “In South Korea, older supervisors generally act much more freely than younger subordinates just because they are older.” Kyeong said, in a similar vein, “It seems that older people think they have more power than younger people in Korean culture.” When age and position are combined together, the possibility of conflicts seems to be higher. Kyeong stated, “Older supervisors are relatively generous with themselves about not admitting to their own faults in the work process. I think they act like that because they are worried about the loss of their authority.”

Won’s case revealed the difficulty of communication with her supervisor due to the organizational status and the priority placed on seniority:

When my supervisor first came to my team, it was hard to try to communicate with her because I was a subordinate, even though I had a much longer period of service than my supervisor in the organization. Furthermore, I could not even suggest allocating existing tasks because I was a subordinate. As you might know, our country’s unreasonable organizational culture places priority on the seniors.

The following statement by Kyeong shows clearly the supervisor’s notion of younger subordinates, which is based on the social context of age in South Korea:

My supervisor never has feelings of fellowship toward subordinates, but she wants to control her subordinates. As you know, seniority carries with it a sense that older people have a definite control over younger people in South Korea. Our country’s social atmosphere with regard to age seems to be very strong. For

example, my supervisor has authoritarian attitudes even though she is not very old—she is just in her 40s.

Hyeon also succinctly addressed Confucian tradition in South Korea:

In South Korea, there is a tendency that relationships between older supervisors and younger subordinates are regarded as if they are parent-child relationships. In other words, older age is equated with greater power in the organization. Of course, it is clear that supervisors play the role of leader, but that does not mean they can do whatever they want. Should younger workers accept such an unreasonable practice? That is a problem.

Kyeong summarized the social and cultural context of South Korea that affects interpersonal conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationship. She said, “I think workplace conflicts with supervisors easily occur in the social context, which combines authoritarianism, rigid hierarchical organizational culture, and cultural tradition related to age”.

In sum, older supervisors’ traditional Confucian way of thinking about age, which influences their behaviors, comes into conflict with younger generation workers’ views of traditional social and organizational culture.

In this theme, three dimensions of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea emerged as answers for the first research question “What experiences do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers have with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors?” The revealed

factors that create conflicts are: (a) supervisor's personal problems, (b) problems in the work process, and (c) social and cultural factors.

Personal impacts of the conflict on younger generation workers

The personal impact experienced by younger generation white-collar workers from interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors included: (a) psychological and emotional distress, (b) decreased work efficiency, and (c) negative influence upon personal relationships.

Psychological and emotional distress. According to the interviews, younger generation South Korean white-collar workers were impacted with regard to aspects of psychological and emotional states. Negative emotions and mental difficulties, such as feelings of resistance, anger, lack of endurance, decreased self-respect, loss of self-worth, unpleasant feelings, mental anguish, a sense of isolation, intense hatred, despair, and a feeling of uneasiness, emerged throughout the interviews.

Yong stated his feeling of resistance to his supervisors' inefficient ways of communication and the psychological discordance between his own views and the situations in the workplace. He said, "I felt a resistance to supervisors' unreasonable ways of communication, but I thought I needed to follow them at the same time because of a sense of belonging to the organization."

Yong's experience of receiving insults from his supervisor was the reason for the occurrence of anger. Yong said, "My supervisor often gave me intolerable insults at the early stage of my career. As time went on, such unpleasant words decreased a little bit. But my sense of anger was enormous at that time." He also talked about the decrease of

self-respect caused by his supervisor's constant rebuke: "My supervisor's repeated scolding made me lose my pride, especially at the early stage of my career." Yong was worried about the possibility that his experiences of conflict with supervisors could influence his attitudes and thoughts unconsciously in the future:

My experiences of workplace conflicts might be helpful in learning about the proper attitude for dealing with supervisors and gaining knowledge about how to receive recognition for my abilities. In addition, I could learn about how to understand an organization and about qualities of good leadership. However, I am worried that my negative experiences may cause me involuntarily to act like my supervisors when I am in a supervisor position in the future.

The personal impact on Chang of experiences of conflict was mainly due to the collectivistic organizational culture, such as *Hwi-shik* because it ignores individuals' own thoughts and characteristics. Chang said, "I was so agonized because I engaged in posturing conversation and made pretentious facial expressions in *Hwi-shik*. It was the only way to adapt to the organizational culture. Maybe, new employees' difficulties in adapting are much larger." Chang also expressed his feelings about relationships in the workplace:

I feel the hardest thing at work is human relationships in the organization, not work itself. Workplace relationships that are not related to work achievement always press me. I want to have a rest after work, but *Hwi-shik* never allows me to have my personal life. I have no choice but to meet all organizational members after work at the *Hwi-shik*, regardless of personal familiarity.

Chang's mental anguish due to *Hwi-shik* culture shows his emotional states:

To speak frankly, *Hwi-shik* is a kind of forced event that mortgages my personal life as a means of survival. It's a shackle in my life. Psychological suffering by *Hwi-shik* is too serious for me. I feel that I am the poorest person in the world.

Min stated her sense of isolation due to conflicts with her supervisor. Min said, "The sense of isolation resulting from the conflict with my supervisor was huge. I felt frustrated because I had to do all my work by myself, even though my tasks required cooperation with the supervisor and other departments."

Min expressed her emotional states regarding her supervisor when she confronted conflicts. Min said, "I always avoided my supervisor because I really did not like to see him. I even disliked the fact that my supervisor was at the same office with me."

In Won's case, she experienced despair due to her supervisor's attitude, which led to conflicts. She said, "I felt despair when my supervisor never listened to my opinions. It seemed that I was walking to a wall." As a result, she lost motivation for work and had a sense of hatred against her supervisor:

I do not even want to wake up in the morning because of workplace conflicts.

Meeting with my supervisor is the worst thing in the daily routine. I am seriously considering quitting my job due to the conflicts with my supervisor.

Kyeong talked about the loss of self-respect due to her supervisor's inappropriate communication in the work process. Kyeong said, "She always damages subordinates' self-respect by giving them sarcastic remarks... These kinds of dismissive remarks create resistant attitudes for subordinates."

Kyeong expressed her difficulty in the workplace because of conflicts and a heavy workload. She said, "I have often considered quitting my job. It is too much of a burden for me to cope with interpersonal workplace conflicts as I perform the large amount of tasks I have."

Hyeon stated he felt he is being ignored, so unpleasant feelings emerged. His feelings were derived from the supervisor's attitude at work:

I have felt that I am always ignored. Her attitude makes me feel as if I'm a child who has no power. She seems to treat me like an elementary school student; she always teaches me, not discusses with me.

Hyeon described his feelings of stress when he observed his colleagues' quitting due to conflicts with the supervisor:

Actually, three of my colleagues quit the jobs because of the conflict. Can you understand how I felt seeing that? It was so terrible. I thought, "I would be next." I experienced it just after the start of work. It has continuously given me stress. Even now, it is still the same situation.

Hyeon spoke of the psychological impact of his conflicts with his supervisor. He said, "I have become a very skeptical and helpless person. And I have lost faith in other people." A detailed description of the personal impact on Hyeon with respect to psychological and emotional states is as follows:

I am skeptical of my work and myself. The situation I am going through will never be changed and my motivation to work will decrease more and more. My self-image is also getting worse. Finally, my attitude toward my whole life will

be changed toward a more negative aspect...Sometimes, I feel I am an incompetent person. I think, "Why can't I cope with it more wisely?" I think the conflict surely occurred mainly because of her improper action and communication. But it also made me feel that I'm also the reason for the conflict. I thought "If another person was in my position, would this conflict have happened?" Frankly speaking, sometimes I think that such a terrible situation happens to me because I'm not fortunate.

Hyeon also complained of somatic symptoms, such as chronic headache, tired blood, and unexpected hair loss due to the extreme distress related to the conflicts.

In summary, younger generation workers commonly expressed negative psychological influence and changes in emotional states because of their experiences; that is, interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships are unhelpful factors with respect to younger generation workers' motivation and commitment at work.

Decreased work efficiency. Younger generation workers mentioned the negative impact of interpersonal workplace conflicts on their work efficiency. Yong described how workplace conflicts with his supervisors negatively affected work efficiency. Yong said, "I thought only of ingratiating myself with supervisors to avoid conflicts. I actually could not focus on my tasks. As a result, overtime work continuously increased and work efficiency was also considerably reduced."

Yong also said work efficiency could be decreased due to the reduction of motivation to work:

Though the staff developed good work ideas, my supervisor never incorporates the ideas into actual work processes. Who will work hard in this kind of organization? Sometimes, the supervisor requires from us a very detailed work process; therefore, the staff cannot take initiative in their work.

Chang pointed out the problems of supervisor-led *Hwi-shik* with regard to its negative impact on work performance:

My supervisor said “*Hwi-shik* is an extension of work!”, “You must participate in *Hwi-shik* unconditionally.” Participation in *Hwi-shik* makes me very tired, so I cannot focus on my work...*Hwi-shik* damages the next day’s tasks by causing team members to be deprived of time for refreshment. In addition, *Hwi-shik* occurs the morning after. For people who dislike *Hwi-shik*, it is a rather negative influence on team spirit. As a result, all team members could be impacted by a sense of anger toward the supervisor as host of *Hwi-shik*.

Min’s experiences illustrate clearly the difficulty of work performance when there are conflicts with a supervisor. She said, “It was very hard to get cooperation from other departments and obtain related information unless my supervisor helps me. But my supervisor’s work assistance was completely blocked due to conflicts between us.”

Won stated that her work attitudes became more negative because of interpersonal workplace conflicts:

I acquired a passive attitude toward my work performance. I worked at the basic level of commitment without an active and pleasant mind. For example, even

though I could do better, I did work on negative lines to a degree that would not create problems.

Kyeong stated that work efficiency was drastically decreased, and she felt a sense of frustration at work due to conflicts with her supervisor. Ineffective communication with her supervisor limited her ability to express her opinions at work. She said, “I think the application of my opinions to my tasks has a connection with the worth of the work. How can I find the worth of my work if I have to do only what the supervisor orders?”

Hyeon mentioned a sense of frustration and negative feelings about the worth of his work and described the conflicts as a terrible situation:

Conflicts with my supervisor have been an obstacle that has hindered my work. I've been often frustrated due to conflicts. And I have continuously wanted to quit my job. During work, I often felt my job had no value. I just worked for a career. So, I should not have endured such a crazy situation.

Hyeon added, “How could I concentrate on work with such a terrible situation? I think it is a miracle for me to withstand conflicts with my supervisor.”

In short, younger generation workers seemed not to give enough attention to their work; rather, they were concerned about conflicts in the workplace. Therefore, younger generation workers perceived a decrease in work efficiency.

Negative influence upon personal relationships. Chang stated that interpersonal workplace conflicts with regard to pressure from his supervisor on subordinates to spend all their time, including private time, for work had a negative impact on workers'

personal relationships. “This forced immersion in work means the sacrifice of individuals’ personal and family life.” In particular, Chang pointed out that the collectivistic organizational culture represented by *Hwi-shik* is detrimental to personal relationships:

A rigid collectivistic organization makes individuals into workaholics by decreasing personal relationships. In other words, other human relationships are never allowed except for the organizational relationships. There are many people, who have trouble with their spouses, loved ones, or children because workers do not have enough time to share with those closest to them.

Hyeon also had a similar view about the negative impact of interpersonal conflicts with the supervisor. He described his experience as follows:

When I experienced conflicts with my supervisor, I often expressed my feelings to my wife. Whom else I could talk to about my situations in the workplace? However, as I talked about dissatisfaction with my supervisor and my intention to quit the job, my wife also got great mental stress, so we quarreled frequently thereafter.

Younger generation workers’ coping strategies for conflicts with their supervisors

The ways of coping with interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships by younger generation white-collar workers were classified into two categories: (a) aversive coping, and (b) reluctant adaptation.

Aversive coping. According to the interviews, most participants responded that they used aversive coping strategies, such as ignorance, endurance, avoidance, and

helplessness. In addition, an extreme way of coping, quitting or changing a job, was chosen by younger generation workers.

Min succinctly stated her way of coping with conflicts: “I did not want to deal with my supervisor; that is, I just ignored him.” Similar to Min’s attitude, Won endured situations that could lead to conflict with her supervisor. Won said, “I just endured and avoided when there was a difference in opinions between my supervisor and me. I did not experience a conflict situation.”

Won discussed her aversive ways of coping due to communication problems with her supervisor:

Since my supervisor is never prepared for communication, I have no way to deal with that problem; therefore, I just try to prevent my mind from creating an emotional crash with my supervisor. I also try not to link emotional states with tasks. In addition, I minimize face-to-face meetings and make agendas that include several matters to be discussed all at the same time when possible. Sometimes, I use emails and memos to deliver task-related matters to the supervisor.

Won also pointed out the difficulty of changing the existing organizational and social culture that largely influences workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships:

Frankly, I have no choice but to tolerate unreasonable situations in the workplace. I think to change the fixed organizational culture is almost impossible. Conflicts could be resolved only when someone gives up, whoever it is, supervisor or

subordinate...I never try to solve problems in the workplace because conflict is considered a social taboo in a Korean cultural context.

Kyeong also had a negative attitude about coping with her supervisor's unreasonable behaviors in the workplace. Kyeong said, "I thought I had to tell my supervisor about unreasonable things, such as excessive workloads and unreasonable deadlines, but I usually endured."

Hyeon expressed his feelings of helplessness with regard to interpersonal conflicts with his supervisor:

What is more serious, there's no way to resolve it. I have always tried to find an effective way to cope with it. But it is nearly impossible to resolve it as long as a counterpart has no desire to response other's efforts...At the beginning, I tried to resolve the conflict in various ways. I tried to have a conversation with my supervisor. And sometimes, I aggressively objected to her unreasonable orders. But, all my efforts did not have an effect on her. As time has passed, I lost the will to cope with conflicts because the supervisor never changed her attitude at all.

Some participants actually had a strong intention to quit their jobs or to transfer from their workplace due to interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors.

Yong said, "I really want to quit my job, except for the money problems because I am no longer able to endure my supervisor. It is too burdensome for me to tolerate the organizational atmosphere where my opinions are ignored and the supervisor's thoughts are forced unilaterally." Similar to Yong's comments, Chang stated that the only way to

resolve workplace conflicts might be getting away from the organizational influence.

Chang expressed his thoughts as follows:

I think there is no way to cope with unreasonable *Hwi-shik* culture because absence from *Hwi-shik* means disadvantages with regard to the supervisor's assessment about me. Therefore, walking out on a job or working independently would be the only way to escape from workplace conflicts.

Kyeong actually transferred to another workplace to avoid interpersonal workplace conflicts. In addition, she said that her coping strategy toward conflicts was an unavoidable choice to prevent unnecessary rumors about interpersonal conflict with her supervisor:

I transferred my workplace because it was the only method that I could do. I did not want to expand conflicts with my former supervisor. The area that I was involved in is very narrow; therefore, there would be no good things to me if rumors about the conflicts circulate.

Aversive coping strategies seemed to be unavoidable for younger generation workers because they do not have confidence in expected outcomes from active coping in terms of career management, livelihood, or a possibility of conflict resolution.

Reluctant adaptation. Younger generation workers also choose reluctant adaptation to cope with conflicts when they have been working a relatively short period and have relatively little work experience. Yong and Hyeon described their feelings about reluctant adaptation, especially at the early stage of facing interpersonal workplace conflicts. Yong's remarks are as follows:

I have tried to adapt to supervisors and the organization for survival. This was the only method to protect my self-respect. However, my change of attitude did not help the quality of my work...The only way to cope with workplace conflicts was adapting to a supervisor. If I did not adapt to the organization, I could not avoid stressful situations.

Hyeon's opinions were similar to Yong's. Hyeon stated that he had no understanding of how to act when he first faced conflict due to his lack of work experiences. Hyeon's thoughts are as follows:

Actually, I felt like I was in a daze. I could not exactly understand why I have to experience those conflicts with my supervisor and how to cope with that situation. I just thought that I was very unfortunate because conflicts occurred due to the supervisor's poor communication abilities, unreasonable behaviors in the work process, and excessive authoritarian attitudes. However, I had no choice but to adapt to the situation because I was worried about my career and I did not know how to resolve workplace conflict with a supervisor at that time.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, findings from data analysis of the interviews were provided. Three themes emerged in response to the research questions of this study: (a) interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors experienced by younger generation workers, (b) personal impacts that younger generation workers perceived, and (c) coping strategies that younger generation workers used.

According to the data analysis, South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experienced the conflicts due to three different dimensions of cause: (a) supervisor's personal shortcomings, (b) problems in the work process, and (c) social and cultural factors. In addition, personal impacts perceived by younger generation workers were: (a) psychological and emotional distress, (b) decreased work efficiency, and (c) negative impact on personal relationships. Finally, coping strategies that younger generation workers used were: (a) aversive attitudes and behaviors, and (b) reluctant adaptation.

In short, South Korean younger generation workers experienced interpersonal workplace conflicts with their elder supervisors due to different reasons and the conflicts influenced younger generation workers on a personal level. Younger generation workers coped with the conflicts in aversive ways or chose reluctant adaptation. In Chapter 5, the conclusion, implications and suggestions based on the findings are discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

This final chapter includes (a) a summary of the study, (b) conclusions, (c) implications for research, theory, and practice, together with (d) suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to (a) document interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by South Korean younger generation white-collar workers in South Korea, (b) investigate personal impacts of the conflicts on younger generation workers, and (c) explore coping strategies that younger generation workers used. Data included stories detailing younger generation white-collar workers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors.

The research questions were: (a) What experiences do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers have with respect to interpersonal workplace conflicts with supervisors?; (b) What personal impacts do South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experience from interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors?; and (c) In what ways do younger generation white-collar workers cope with interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships within given social/cultural contexts of South Korea?

A qualitative approach was used to understand participants' experiences and ways of interpreting those experiences. Experiences of younger generation workers with regard to interpersonal conflicts at work in supervisor-subordinate relationships within the specific social and cultural contexts of South Korea were examined using phenomenological methods.

The number of participants in this study was six. The samples were purposefully selected by criterion-based, homogenous, and snowball/chain referral sampling methods. The sampling criteria in this research included the following requirements: (a) all participants were native South Koreans; (b) all were white-collar workers in staff or deputy manager positions and were members of younger generation, meaning they were born after 1976; (c) they all had experienced interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors; and (d) they were able to orally articulate their experiences.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using the interview guide. All interviews were done through Skype telephone, an Internet-based communication service. Each interview took 1-2 hours. Original transcriptions in Korean of the interviews were made as the interviews occurred with no audio recording.

Data analysis that included coding and categorization was done with the original Korean transcriptions. Not all transcriptions were translated into English. Instead, selected sentences and paragraphs were translated into English to show the participants' original remarks in this script. Collected data were analyzed by data preparation, coding, categorizing, and synthesizing using the conceptual framework.

Three themes were evident that related to the research questions. The first theme had to do with causes of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. Conflicts could be divided into three dimensions: (a) supervisor's personal problems, such as ineffective communication, abusive supervision, and professional incompetence; (b) problems in the work process, such as the absence of job autonomy, perceived unfairness about work assignment, and quantity and result-centered performance appraisal; and (c) social and cultural factors, such as hierarchy and authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism. The second theme had to do with personal impacts experienced by younger generation workers. This theme included (a) psychological and emotional distress, (b) decreased work efficiency, and (c) negative impact on personal relationships. The last theme was associated with coping strategies that the South Korean younger generation workers used. Coping strategies included (a) aversive attitudes and behaviors, such as avoidance, endurance, or turnover and (b) reluctant adaptation.

Conclusions and Discussion

Conclusion 1: In South Korea, interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships have multiple causal dimensions

Buon (2008) argued that individual factors, such as “poor interpersonal process skills; competing needs and goals; inappropriate use of personal power; conflicting values and principles; lack of job satisfaction; relationship problems; lack of autonomy or ability to make choices at work” (p. 251) caused interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. In addition, organizational factors, such as

“incomplete briefings; lack of team leadership; inappropriate management style; office politics; ineffective conflict resolution systems; lack of effective work performance management systems; overly competitive workplace culture; unfair decision-making practices; workload; power distribution” (pp. 251-252) were also reasons for conflicts at work. The findings of this study that were related to causes of interpersonal workplace conflicts significantly coincide with these individual and organizational factors identified by Buon (2008). In this study, the interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships experienced by the South Korean younger generation white-collar workers revealed three different dimensions with regard to causes for the conflicts.

First, supervisor’s personal factors, such as ineffective communication abilities, abusive supervision, and professional incompetence at work were perceived by younger generation workers as sources of interpersonal workplace conflicts. Regarding supervisors’ ineffective communication, younger generation workers perceived common features such as inattentive listening, self-righteous attitude, and one-way communication style as barriers to communication with their supervisors. Parker, Axtell, and Turner (2001) stated that communication quality is an important factor for employees to feel a sense of stability. Therefore, younger generation workers seemed to have unstable psychological states in supervisor-subordinate relationships when problems in workplace communication existed. In short, ineffective communication between supervisors and subordinates interfered with effective work process and created emotional problems for younger generation workers.

Supervisors' supervision revealing negative features in attitudes and behaviors, such as personal insults, coercive attitudes, repeated scolding, senseless actions, intentional harmful behaviors, perceived unfairness in the work process, self-centered attitudes, and rude behaviors caused younger subordinates to have negative images of supervisors that influenced the occurrences of interpersonal workplace conflicts. These unfavorable aspects could be regarded as abusive supervision. Tepper (2000) stated, "abusive supervision is subordinates' perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (p. 178). That is, abusive supervision exists when subordinates' subjective assessment about their supervisors' behaviors includes continued nonphysical hostility and hierarchical mistreatment (Tepper, 2007). Though abusive supervision is a kind of purposeful behavior, supervisors do not realize their own abusive supervisory behaviors (Tepper, 2007). As a result, only subordinates are under stress due to abusive supervision and they cannot find a way to resolve the situation; therefore, interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships could worsen. Additionally, abusive supervision negatively influences subordinates' job satisfaction and organizational commitment; therefore, it induces unfavorable attitudes and intentions to quit a job (Tepper, 2007). In a similar vein, Einarsen et al. (1994) mentioned that employees who suffer from workplace bullying tend to be more dissatisfied with leadership in their organization. In short, supervisors play an important role in interpersonal workplace relationships.

Second, work-related factors, such as absence of job autonomy, perceived unfairness about work assignment, and quantity and result-centered performance appraisal generate conflicts. Job autonomy means, “the degrees of discretion employees have over important decisions in their work, such as the timing and methods of their tasks” (Parker et al., 2001, p. 212). Morgeson, Delaney-Klinger, and Hemingway (2005) emphasized the importance of job autonomy due to the positive relation to job performance. According to Thomson and Prottas (2005), job autonomy positively influences employees’ attitudes and well-being, and is positively manifested in such areas as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and positive spillover. Therefore, the absence of job autonomy caused by supervisors could be a negative factor for subordinates with regard to dissatisfaction with their jobs.

Schieman and Reid (2008) pointed out employees’ perceived unfairness could be a serious cause of interpersonal conflicts in the workplace. In addition, Cohen-Charash and Mueller (2007) stated perceived unfairness in the workplace causes high levels of undesirable interpersonal behavior. Therefore, younger generation workers’ perceived unfairness concerning work assignment by supervisors had a great possibility of causing interpersonal conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships.

Ineffective performance review by supervisors also could be a cause of workplace conflicts. According to participants’ interviews, performance appraisal that focuses on quantitative aspects of outcomes without regard to the work process caused interpersonal conflicts with supervisors. Coens and Jenkins (2002) pointed out performance appraisal’s weak points in terms of being a subjective, biased, short-term appraisal.

Thus, employees could be uncomfortable when they experience unreasonable appraisal by their supervisors, especially when their work process is ignored. Grubb (2007) stated, “The employee may submit to the authority of the supervisor’s office and accept the adverse feedback, but continue to resent it” (p. 11). If younger generation workers repeatedly do not accept performance appraisal, workplace conflicts may occur easily.

Third, social/cultural factors, such as hierarchy and authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism in South Korean society largely influenced the occurrence of conflicts. Aquino and Thau (2009) stated that employees in lower positions in the organization where hierarchical system exists tend to have higher levels of workplace victimization including abusive supervision, social undermining, emotional abuse, and identity threat. Generally, hierarchical organizations are operated by a top-down decision-making and communication system that is based on order of rank; therefore, people in relatively higher positions have more power that may be misused or wielded excessively. Hierarchical organizations have a high possibility of workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships (Aquino & Thau, 2009).

Furthermore, the age context affected workplace conflicts when combined with hierarchy. Northam (2009) stated, “Age and hierarchy can influence conflict management and outcomes, especially when one person, or the other, sees deference as the proper role for the younger worker or subordinate” (p. 71). This authoritarian attitude of older supervisors negatively influences the work environment and employees’ sense of well-being (Coyne et al., 2003). According to Collins and O’Rourke (2009), a social climate at work that does not support employees’ personal issues, effective workplace

communication, or work-related issues can create stressful situations for employees; therefore, the possibility of conflicts may increase. The findings in this study showed that collectivistic culture in South Korean workplaces, such as *Hwi-shik* and group-centered ways of thinking, was a factor creating conflict in the workplace. Concerning the negative impact of *Hwi-shik*, Cha et al. (2008) identified *Hwi-shik* as an influence on occupational stress and self-perceived fatigue of South Korean white-collar workers. Additionally, *Hwi-shik* was one of the most influential factors contributing to employee job stress that causes employees' absences and early leave (Kim et al., 2009).

The age context in Confucian culture, represented by "elder first", was a factor obstructing prevention and resolution of workplace conflicts in South Korea. In other words, older supervisors' fixed traditional Confucian ways of thinking and behaviors made it hard to resolve conflicts even if younger subordinates tried to make changes in conflict situations. Ryu and Cervero (2011) studied the role of Confucian values in program planning qualitatively and identified the importance of the age context in Korean society. They said, "The age factor among Confucian values is the single most critical issue in determining planners' action and decisions in program planning" (p. 154).

In summary, employees' job stress was influenced by interpersonal workplace conflicts resulting from environmental factors at work, such as human relationships, and the South Korean organizational culture (Kim et al., 2009).

Wang et al. (2005) examined five aspects of Confucian values: (a) hierarchy and harmony, (b) group orientation, (c) relationships, (d) face, and (e) time orientation. Among those five aspects, two factors, hierarchy/harmony, and group orientation, are in a

similar vein to the findings of this study. Wang et al. (2005) discussed hierarchy/harmony and the relationship between conflicts and Confucianism.

The principle of harmony implies aspirations toward a conflict-free group-oriented system of social relations. In the Confucian paradigm, social hierarchy and relations of subordination and superiority are considered natural and proper. (p. 315)

They also mentioned group orientation and conflicts.

Individuals exist for the benefit of the group, group pressure is applied to ensure conformity through eliciting shame and conflict is generally handled through internal meditation rather than an external legal system. In other words, individuals are perceived as part of a network of social relations where their individual interests often come second to those of the group or the collective. (p. 315)

In short, interpersonal conflicts in the organization, especially in supervisor-subordinate relationships, could be regarded as an undesirable phenomenon from the Confucian point of view. However, younger generation South Korean workers pointed out hierarchy and collectivism as causes of interpersonal workplace conflicts along with Confucianism. In fact, as Wang et al. (2005) discussed, a culture that is hierarchical and collectivistic can be attributed to Confucian values; after all, Confucianism was the single most influential factor that causes interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. For that reason, Burke (2010) emphasized the importance of assessing cultural values in a country to obtain exact aspects of workplace stress.

Conclusion 2: Conflicts negatively impact the South Korean younger generation white-collar workers' work and quality of life

Buon (2008) described the negative impact that a dysfunctional workplace conflict has on employees. For example, impacts for individuals, such as “loss of commitment to job and organization; frustration; stress; anxiety or depression; strained working relationships; feelings of isolation; loss of self-esteem; increased feelings of anger; decreased personal work performance” (p. 257) could be generated. At the organizational level, negative impacts, such as “employee turnover; reduced productivity and performance; loss of creativity and innovation” (p. 257) can emerge because of workplace conflicts. Personal impacts in the findings of this study were in a similar vein with those negative aspects of impact due to dysfunctional workplace conflicts.

De Dreu and Gelfand (2007) said “Workplace conflict has important consequences for health and well-being” (p. 26). According to the findings of this study, the personal impacts that the South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experienced were mostly negative. Workplace conflicts changed their psychological and emotional states in negative ways; that is, workplace conflicts are significant factors generating psychological stress (Burke, 2010). Galovan et al. (2010) also stated, “The workplace can create psychological demands, which may negatively influence mental health. Work stress may result in higher levels of depressive symptoms” (p. 648). In short, it was clear that workplace conflicts impact the quality of workers' psychological and emotional states.

The findings of this study were consistent with Jehn et al. (2008) with regard to emotional states and efficiency in performance. They stated, “An important aspect of conflict in groups, when considering team effectiveness, is negative emotion. Jealousy, hatred, anger, and frustration are negative emotions often associated with conflict that can adversely affect group processes and performance” (p. 471). In a similar vein, Kisamore et al. (2010) stated that uncivil and hostile interactions at work aggravated conflicts by causing harmful psychological and emotional impact. As a result, employees’ work performance, job satisfaction, and a commitment to the organization were significantly reduced.

The findings of this study showed that younger generation workers’ personal relationships could be impacted in non-constructive ways. For example, work-family conflicts, defined as “inter-role conflict in which the role pressure from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some aspect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77), were common among workers interviewed for the study. Work-family conflict can lead to psychological strain and distress (Barling, Kelloway & Frone, 2005). According to Saxbe (2009), work-to-family conflict occurs when job stress carries over to the home and influences family life. Results of this study showed that South Korean younger generation white-collar workers experienced this work-to-family conflict due to workplace conflicts with their supervisors. In particular, *Hwi-shik*, which mainly happened after regular work hours, was one of the outstanding factors generating work-family conflict due to excessive time in the workplace and away from home.

The findings of this study revealed that interpersonal workplace conflicts decreased younger generation white-collar workers' work efficiency. According to Taris and Schreurs (2009), high levels of emotional exhaustion decrease organizational performance; therefore, negative impact from workplace conflicts could unconstructively affect employees' work efficiency. Copper et al. (2001) reported consistent negative relationships between psychological strain and job satisfaction. In contrast, Youssef and Luthans (2007) stated that positive psychological capacities, such as hope, optimism, and resilient are positively related to work-related outcomes, such as performance, job satisfaction, work happiness, and organizational commitment. In a similar vein, Bakker et al. (2008) stated that higher levels of employees' sense of well-being enhanced job motivation and performance. According to the findings of this study, interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinates relationships affected younger generation white-collar workers' psychological and emotional states in a negative way. As a result, younger generation white-collar workers' work efficiency reduced, corresponding to their negative change in psychological and emotional states.

In summary, it was obvious that dysfunctional interpersonal conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korean workplaces were detrimental to younger generation white-collar workers' personal aspects, such as psychological and emotional states, work efficiency, and personal relationships.

Conclusion 3: Younger generation white-collar workers have nonconstructive, aversive attitudes toward the conflicts within South Korean social contexts

The strong influence of Confucianism in South Korean society was identified through younger generation white-collar workers' stories of their experiences. In the findings, younger generation workers principally chose aversive coping strategies when they faced conflicts within the Confucian social and cultural context. "Avoiding involves taking a passive stance and attempts to reduce and downplay the importance of the conflict issues, as well as attempts to suppress thinking about them" (Dijkstra et al., 2009, p. 407).

According to Kim-Jo, Benet-Martinez, and Ozer (2010), Koreans generally use an avoidant style to cope with conflicts, being influenced by a traditionally collectivistic style. Because collectivistic culture is one of the outstanding characteristics in Confucianism (Ryu & Cervero, 2011; Wang et al., 2005; Wang & Liu, 2010), younger generation workers who work in an organization affected by Confucian values seem to choose aversive ways of coping rather than active coping. Komarraju, Dollinger, and Lovell (2008) stated that people tend to sacrifice personal needs for group goals and use an obliging, avoiding, or integrating style to manage conflicts in collectivistic culture. Similarly, Bhagat et al. (2010) said, "Collectivists tend to seek and maintain harmony with the members of their in-groups and emphasize the quality of relationships in their work and personal lives" (p. 14). This passive tendency in coping with conflicts is found in countries that have a collectivistic culture. For example, Kirkbride et al. (1991) reported that Chinese employees, who are generally more collectivistic in orientation, preferred avoiding, yielding, and compromising. Additionally, Leung et al. (1992) found that Japanese college students were more compliant than were Canadian and Dutch

students. Concerning the reason for aversive tendencies in coping strategies for conflicts, Liu et al. (2008) demonstrated that people in a Confucian culture learn to endure their negative emotions and to manage behaviors in conflict situations.

Liu et al. (2008) stated that an avoiding style to cope with conflicts includes low concerns about not only the self but also the other party. The avoiding style generally showed withdrawal behaviors. What is worse, the findings showed that the South Korean younger generation white-collar workers sometimes use more extreme coping techniques, such as quitting or changing their jobs. Davis et al. (2009) discussed the problem in aversive coping with conflicts.

Routinely avoiding the other person instead of dealing with the conflict may not be constructive, but postponing a confrontation in order to allow strong negative emotions to subside would seem to be. In either case, such non-confrontational approaches will generally have the effect of keeping unpleasant emotions from escalating. (p. 341)

In other words, aversive coping with conflict situations cannot alleviate negative personal outcomes for workers, such as psychological and emotional distress.

Implications for Research, Theory, and Practice

The results of this study provide implications in three dimensions: (a) research, (b) theory, and (c) practice.

Implications for Research

With regard to research on interpersonal workplace conflict, the qualitative approach in this study was beneficial in understanding essential points of the

phenomenon. Participants' experiences as described in their verbal descriptions could be clarified and organized. Furthermore, the social and cultural contexts of the phenomenon were illuminated with specific examples in the data analysis. In this study, hierarchy and authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism as social and cultural contexts in South Korea represented significant backdrops that affected the occurrence of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. This study demonstrated why it is necessary for researchers to consider specific social and cultural contexts when they investigate the social phenomenon in a specific society. For example, to apply the theoretical framework of interpersonal workplace conflicts in an Asian country to a Western country without understanding cultural differences could distort understanding of a social phenomenon. From this viewpoint, Komarraju, Dollinger, and Lovell (2007) emphasized the importance of cultural values in understanding conflict management styles. Kim-Jo, Benet-Martinez, and Ozer (2010) also put emphasis on cultural background in investigating conflict resolution styles.

Considering the methodological aspects of future research, the qualitative and quantitative approaches could be complementary to each other. Detailed verbal descriptions about a phenomenon is a characteristic of an inductive process in qualitative methods as it results in so called "rich description" in which words rather than numerical data are employed to express the researcher's findings and interpretation of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, qualitative approaches are beneficial for in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon, in particular, within social and cultural contexts (Javalgi, Granot, & Alejandro, 2011). Meanwhile, quantitative research

methods have been the dominant approach to investigating workplace conflicts. Though quantitative approaches provide only superficial descriptive accounts, researchers are able to understand the trend of a phenomenon (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Creswell (2009) stated, “The qualitative and quantitative data can be merged into one large database or the results used side by side to reinforce each other” (p.14). Therefore, effective use of the two different approaches could be helpful for researchers to study a social phenomenon in terms of enhancing validity.

Implications for Theory

The results of this study contributed to the creation of a theoretical framework to explain interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. The foundation of this study’s conceptual framework was the lens model of interpersonal conflict by Wilmot and Hocker (2007), which described the elements in conflict interactions. In the model, the process of interpersonal conflict contains the individual’s own view of self, the other person, and their relationship. Additionally, when communication between persons occurs, each individual interprets through his/her own lens of perceptions. Regarding other’s behaviors, people use different attributions, that is, external attribution for their behaviors and internal attribution for others’ behaviors. The findings for this study displayed the same aspects as in the lens model; however, an individual’s lens of perceptions was largely influenced by social and cultural factors. In this study, South Korea’s distinctive social and cultural contexts including hierarchy/authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucianism were the important factors impacting individuals’ ways of thinking and behaviors. That is, the lens model for

understanding interpersonal conflicts in South Korean society was expanded by the social and cultural aspects.

Concept map. In the first chapter, the conceptual framework to guide this study was developed from a review of the professional literature. It had two domains: phenomenon and worker's experience. In the intersection, there were the worker's worldview and the personal impact of experiences. This phenomenon occurred within the South Korean social context.

The following concept map was derived from the findings of this study. It embodied the conceptual framework in Chapter 1 to explain holistic aspects of the experiences of conflicts by South Korean younger generation workers in supervisor-subordinate relationships at work. In Figure 3, there are two domains: (a) South Korean younger generation workers' experiences, and (b) the general phenomenon of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships.

South Korean younger generation workers perceive interpersonal workplace conflicts with their elder supervisors occurring for different reasons: (a) supervisor's personal shortcomings, (b) problems in the work process, and (c) social and cultural factors. In the intersecting domain between the two circles, younger generation workers' experiences of conflicts are interpreted through their own worldviews, and personal impacts occur. Younger generation workers' perceived personal impacts consist of three categories: (a) psychological and emotional distress, (b) decreased work efficiency, and (c) negative influence upon personal relationships. Hierarchical

organizational atmosphere, authoritarianism, collectivism, and Confucian culture in South Korea exist as social/cultural contexts surrounding the phenomenon.

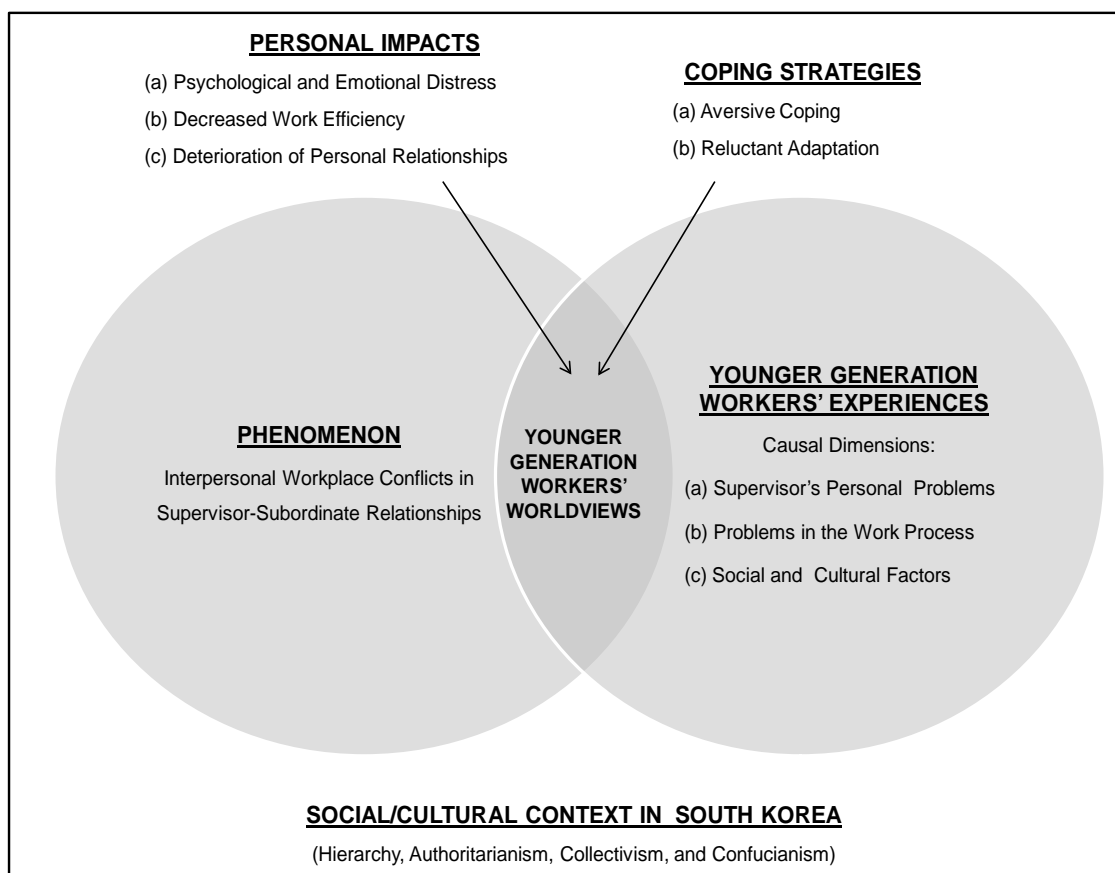


Figure 3. Concept Map

Implications for Practice

The results of this study provided practical implications with regard to important aspects in the HR field, such as workers' characteristics, employee training, leadership development, and work environment. De Dreu (2008) said, "Conflict is stressful and related to rigidity of thought, psychosomatic complaints, and feelings of burnout" (p. 13). In addition, "the occurrence of conflict is related to deteriorated well-being, and the measurement of occurrence of conflict at work should become an important

tool...conflict produces passive and inadequate coping behavior it will lead to more organizational stress” (Dijkstra, 2005, p. 31). To prevent dysfunctional workplace conflicts, employers should understand workers’ characteristics. This study’s participants, younger generation white-collar workers, experienced conflicts due to factors based on the social and cultural influence of South Korean society. As the literature review showed, younger generation in South Korea has a negative view of Confucian tradition; therefore, organizational culture that includes Confucian values is less than optimal for younger generation workers of today. In addition, younger generation workers were able to understand existing organizational culture and suggested ways to create a better work environment through employee training. For older supervisors, new leadership techniques to work with younger generation workers can be developed through workplace education.

In a transitory period of social and cultural reframing, the harmony between older and younger generation workers could be achieved through changes in ways of thinking guided by effective education and training in the workplace. Training to cope effectively with workplace conflicts is also required. De Dreu (2008) clearly discussed constructive ways of coping with workplace conflicts.

The whole workplace conflict is hindering rather than helping the individuals and groups involved...and constructive conflict management is critical to mitigate the potentially very negative effects of workplace conflict on health and well-being, on individual and group creativity and innovation, on team effectiveness, and on inter-organizational collaboration. (p. 15)

Limitation of the Study

First, the result of this study generated a situated or naturalistic generalization that is different from formal generalization in a quantitative approach; that is, it has a narrow meaning of generalization. Simons et al. (2003) discussed the concept of naturalistic generalization.

While formalistic generalization hands on formal, predictive propositions intact, naturalistic generalization is situated in that it relies on interpretation and judgment rather than rule or procedure to transfer knowledge from one context to another. It is a process of recognition and adaptation, on the basis of similarities and differences, to one's own context (p. 360).

In short, this study used a phenomenological approach intended to obtain language-based interpretative results for the study through participants' stories of experiences rather than predictive outcomes through numerical analysis.

Second, the data used in this study reflected only subordinates' point of views because the aim of the research was to understand South Korean younger generation white-collar workers' experiences of interpersonal conflicts with their supervisors. A holistic understanding of the phenomenon would need viewpoints of both supervisors and subordinates. In other words, perceptions and interpretation of people in organizations can be very different depending on individual circumstances, such as organizational position and age, even if they confront the same situations; therefore, an effort to contrast and compare diverse standpoints may be required for overall understanding of interpersonal workplace conflicts.

Third, it is likely that many South Korean younger generation white-collar workers would have different opinions than those responding to this study. This may be because this sample was a narrowly defined group. As a result, others might react very differently to the same interview questions.

Suggestions for Future Research

For those considering further research in the area of workplace conflict, a quantitative approach, such as survey research, might be beneficial to reveal the overall trends of the phenomenon, if it could be used together with a qualitative method. For example, survey research could discover trends, attitudes, or opinion of people by providing numeric descriptions (Creswell, 2009). At the same time, a researcher could apply qualitative methods, such as an interviews, observations, or case studies. The combination of two different kinds of methodological approaches would help to overcome each method's weak points.

Second, a qualitative study with supervisors' points of views would illuminate additional dimensions in interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships. By comparing the perspectives of younger subordinates and older supervisors, objective understanding of the phenomenon would increase. Related to this is Creswell's (2009) suggestion of the sequential transformative strategy:

The sequential transformative strategy is a two-phase project with a theoretical lens (e.g., gender, race, social science theory) overlaying the sequential procedures...By using two phases, a sequential transformative researcher may be able to give voice to diverse perspectives, to better advocate for participants, or to

better understand a phenomenon or process that is changing as a result of being studied. (pp. 212-213)

Third, expanding research themes and sites would enhance the understanding of dynamics in the workplace. For example, by investigating other kinds of interpersonal conflict in the workplace, such as relationships among subordinates, different aspects of workplace conflicts could be revealed. In addition, similar studies in other countries would allow meaningful cross-cultural comparisons. As Gelfand, Eraz, and Aycan (2007) emphasized, the significance of cross-cultural studies in the organizational behavior field have increased due to dramatic changes in the globalized workplace. By using various methodological perspectives, the understating of social phenomena could be expanded.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, (a) overall study was summarized, (b) conclusions were presented, (c) implications for research, theory, and practice were discussed, and (d) suggestions for future research were provided.

In South Korea, younger generation white-collar workers' experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships had multiple causal dimensions. Conflicts negatively influenced younger generation white-collar workers' personal and work lives, and younger generation white-collar workers had nonconstructive, aversive coping attitudes toward the conflicts within the social contexts in South Korea. In summary, younger generation white-collar workers experienced

conflicts with supervisors in South Korean workplaces that had multiple causes and negative impacts, and they did not successfully manage the conflicts.

Beneficial aspects of the qualitative method in investigating the phenomenon were discussed. Additionally, the importance considering of social and cultural characteristics to understand a social phenomenon in a specific culture was presented. This study expanded its theoretical framework based on the lens model of interpersonal conflict with respect to understanding workplace conflicts in supervisor-subordinate relationships in South Korea. The conclusions of this study suggested practical implications for the understanding of workers' characteristics, employee training, leadership development, and work environment. A mixed method approach with quantitative and qualitative approaches and expanded studies in terms of research themes, objects, and sites was suggested for future research.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE (KOREAN)

인터뷰 가이드 (한국어)

주제	인터뷰 질문
도입부 질문	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 이름이 무엇입니까? 2. 나이가 어떻게 되십니까? 3. 학력은 어떻게 되십니까? 4. 결혼유무를 말씀해 주시겠습니까? 5. 직장경력은 얼마나 되십니까? 6. 직장에서의 직위는 무엇입니까? 7. 직장에서 주요 업무는 무엇입니까? 8. 함께 일하는 팀원 (또는 부서원)은 모두 몇 명입니까? 9. 현재 또는 예전 상사와의 갈등 경험이 있습니까?
상사와의 개인간 갈등 경험	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 가장 기억에 남는 상사와의 갈등 경험을 말씀해 주시겠습니까? 2. 왜 그러한 갈등이 일어났다고 생각하십니까? 즉, 본인이 생각하는 갈등의 원인(들)에 대하여 말씀해 주십시오.
갈등 경험의 개인적 영향	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 갈등을 유발한 상사의 행동, 말, 태도 등에 대해 어떻게 느꼈습니까? 2. 갈등 경험이 귀하의 직업 생활에 영향을 미쳤습니까? 그렇다면 어떠한 영향을 미쳤다고 생각하십니까? 3. 갈등 경험이 직업 생활에 어떠한 변화를 일으켰습니까? 4. 갈등 경험이 일과 관련한 동기, 태도, 감정과 같은 심리 상태에 어떠한 영향을 미쳤다고 생각하십니까?
갈등 대처전략	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 갈등에 어떻게 대처하였습니까? 특정한 대처전략이 있었습니까? 2. 한국의 사회적, 문화적 맥락이 갈등을 대처하는 방식에 어떠한 영향을 미쳤다고 생각하십니까? 3. 직장에서의 개인간 갈등을 방지하고 해결하기 위한 합리적 방안은 무엇이라고 생각하십니까?

APPENDIX B
WORKSHEET SAMPLE

ID & Turn #	Original Korean Transcription	Translated English Transcription	Note	Categorization		
				Themes	Categories	Subcategories
D:9	일의 진행 절차에 대한 이견이 생길 경우가 종종 있는데 대개 일을 진행하기 전 사전에 충분한 논의가 이루어지지 않고 명령 하달적인 경우가 대부분 이죠. 근본적으로 상사와 부하직원들간에 서로에 대한 신뢰와 상호 존중이 바탕이 된 동료의식이 부족하다는 생각이 듭니다.	Sometimes, different views about the work process occur because my supervisor just gives orders without any discussion before work starts. Fundamentally, the fellowship that is based on mutual respect and trust is too weak between younger subordinates and their older supervisors.	Cause of conflict: Trouble in communication	1. Experiences of conflicts according to causal dimension	1.1. Supervisor's personal problems	1.1.1. Ineffective communication
C:29	상사를 너무 보기 싫었기 때문에 상사가 있는 곳이라면 모두 피해 다녔어요. 상사와 같은 공간에 있는 것 자체가 싫었거든요.	I always avoided my supervisor because I really did not like him to see him. I even disliked the fact that my supervisor was at the same office with me.	Personal impact: Emotional distress	2. Personal impacts	2.1. Psychological and emotional distress	
F:25	더 심각한 것은 갈등을 해결할 방법이 없다는 거예요. 어떻게 해야 갈등에 잘 대처할 지 지도 많이 고민해 봤지만, 결국 상대방이 내 노력에 대해 응답해 줄 의지조차 없다면 갈등 해결은 거의 불가능 하다고 봅니다.	What is more serious, there's no way to resolve it. I have always tried to find an effective way to cope with it. But it is nearly impossible to resolve it as long as a counterpart has no desire to response other's efforts	Coping strategy: Avoidant attitude	3. Coping strategies	3.1. Aversive coping	

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____, agree to participate in a study titled "YOUNGER GENERATION OFFICE WORKERS' EXPERIENCES OF INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS WITH SUPERVISORS IN SOUTH KOREA", conducted by Jaehyun Park, Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Roger Hill & Dr. John Schell, Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations, University of Georgia.

My participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at anytime without giving any reason and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

Purposes: The interview, for which I am being asked to participate, is a part of a study that is focused on examining younger generation office workers' experiences of interpersonal conflicts with supervisors in South Korea. The purposes of this study are to: (a) document interpersonal workplace conflicts experienced by South Korean younger generation office workers, (b) investigate personal impacts on younger generation office workers, and (c) explore coping strategies that younger generation office workers used when experiencing interpersonal conflicts.

Benefits: The benefit that I may expect from this study is to contribute to creating a framework that increases the understanding of younger generation office workers' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of interpersonal workplace conflicts with their supervisors in South Korean workplaces. Therefore, I can also reflect on what I have experienced in my organization.

Procedure: If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things: (a) answer interview questions about my experiences of interpersonal workplace conflicts with my supervisor, (b) answer follow-up interview questions, if needed. My part in this study will last for one week, and each visit will last one hour. I will be asked a series of questions about (a) my experiences with workplace conflicts, (b) personal impacts of workplace conflicts on my work life and psychological state, and (c) my coping strategies toward workplace conflicts. I am not required to answer the questions. I may pass on any question that makes me feel uncomfortable. At any time, I may notify the researcher that I would like to stop the interview and my participation in the study.

Discomforts or Stresses: No discomforts or stresses are expected.

Risks: There are no risks associated with participating in the study.

Confidentiality: The interview will be recorded or transcribed; however, my name will not be included in recording or transcription. My name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of my information and interview responses will be kept confidential. The researcher will not share my individual responses with anyone other than the research supervisor.

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at _____ (Jae Hyun Park).

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Jae Hyun Park
Name of Researcher
Telephone: _____
Email: _____

Signature

Date

Name of Participant


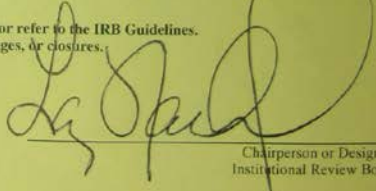
Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 629 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX D
IRB APPROVAL

 Office of The Vice President for Research DHHS Assurance ID No.: FWA00003901	Institutional Review Board Human Subjects Office 612 Boyd GSRC Athens, Georgia 30602-7411 (706) 542-3199 Fax: (706) 542-3360 www.ovpr.uga.edu/hso															
APPROVAL FORM																
Date Proposal Received: 2011-02-16	Project Number: 2011-10646-0															
<table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Name</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Title</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Dept/Phone</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Address</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Email</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Dr. Roger B. Hill</td> <td>PI</td> <td>Workforce Education, Leadership And Social Foundations 850 College Station Rd Rm 209</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mr. Jaehyun Park</td> <td>CO</td> <td>WELSF</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Name	Title	Dept/Phone	Address	Email	Dr. Roger B. Hill	PI	Workforce Education, Leadership And Social Foundations 850 College Station Rd Rm 209			Mr. Jaehyun Park	CO	WELSF		
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<p>Your human subjects study has been approved.</p> <p>Please be aware that it is your responsibility to inform the IRB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... of any adverse events or unanticipated risks to the subjects or others within 24 to 72 hours; ... of any significant changes or additions to your study and obtain approval of them before they are put into effect; ... that you need to extend the approval period beyond the expiration date shown above; ... that you have completed your data collection as approved, within the approval period shown above, so that your file may be closed. <p>For additional information regarding your responsibilities as an investigator refer to the IRB Guidelines. Use the attached Researcher Request Form for requesting renewals, changes, or closures. Keep this original approval form for your records.</p>																
 _____ Chairperson or Designee, Institutional Review Board																