The impacts of social context on individual experiences related to working hours

Focusing on the private break of Korean employees

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Abstract

Long working-hour problem in Korea has been prevalent for many years. Compare to other countries, it has been one of the countries which have the longest working-hour in the world. As working long hours is directly related to employees' work-life balance, job satisfaction, health and more, previous researches as well as political attempts have tried to resolve this chronic problem. Previous approaches focused on finding how intrinsic working culture of Korea contributed to long working hours, in which aspects it has an impact on employees and how Korean Labor Standard Act should be improved. However, how employees who actually face the problem experience in their workplace was often marginalized both in the relevant research and regulation amendment. This is pointed out in this study as a reason why the actual working hours of Korean employees could not be reduced. In opposition to the argument which shifts the responsibility of long working-hour to the individual choices, this study emphasizes the impact of social context on the individual decision making. If how employees experience different situations related to working hours and which contextual factors affect them are not properly observed, it will be hard to present which direction future researches and political changes should pursue.

In the light of this argument, this study interviewed 8 Korean employees to see what are the contextual factors which constraint their behaviour at workplaces, especially focusing on their 'private break' usage. The findings of this study showed that employees have common experiences with contextual factors and they were not only constraining employees' private break usage but they were also making interrelations by themselves. This result implies that considering employees' experience and the impact of social context will generate more profound understanding of long working-hour problem in Korea. Considering the nature of long working-hour of Korea as a complex problem, detailed description of individual experiences and perception by taking an example of private break will contribute better understanding and approach to the solution.

Key words: working hours, long working-hour problem, South Korea, Korean Labor Standard Act, employee, social context, private break.
Word count: 20,429

List of figures and tables

Table of contents

1   Introduction

″What makes Korean employees take for granted working long-hours?″ This study starts with this question. In 2017, the average annual hours actually worked per worker of South Korea (henceforth Korea) were 2,024 hours, which took the third highest place after Mexico and Costa Rica (OECD Statistics, 2017). When considering the OECD counterpart is 1,744 hours, it is not difficult to see how excessive working-hour is in Korea. The share of employees working very long hours (50 hours or more per week), 20.8%, is also higher than the OECD average of 13% (OECD Better Life Index).

As the long working-hour phenomenon is considered as serious social problem in the country, it has been a quite popular issue to study. Existing studies tried to find out what causes long working hours of Korean employees, especially focusing on the Korean national and organizational culture. Others emphasized the negative impact of long working hours on employees' health and work-life satisfaction. Following the recent amendment of Korean Labor Standard Act (henceforth LSA), lately the focus of studies mostly dealt with the main changes of regulations and their right and wrong. However, why the repetitive attempts from the government could not be settled down as successful policy implementations has not been thoroughly discussed by them. While focusing on the ostensible features, how employees perceive and experience the problem in their life was not concretely revealed. It often mislead into the conclusion blaming individuals, saying that there is no justification to stop them if working long hours is the result of their own decisions.

This study builds its position on the argument that the individual employees should not be blamed as the only contributor to the long working-hour problem. Rather, it argues that among many other approaches, studying how individual's choice and behavior have been constrained by their surroundings should not be underestimated to reveal what lies behind the surface. In the light of this argument, observing how employees spend their time for work and non-work related time within working hours will provide more detailed examples what makes employees hard to escape from existing custom of long working-hour. The specific focus is on the "private break" at workplace; it is not clearly defined terminology in Korean workplaces but employees have a common sense of its meaning. By taking a specific example of private break, this study will show not only how employees use private break but also which contextual factors are interrelated with their private break usage. As a result, this study aims to show how individual employee's choices are formed by social context and how this accordingly infers the contribution to the existing long working-hour problem.

1.1 Problematization

For employees, how they work defines their life, formulates their self and provides income which enables them to meet the basic conditions of life (Kim, 2014:5). Even though they are bound by a job contract, they need basic right to control their time because working-hour occupies the majority of their time. When they cannot autonomously use their time within working hours, scheduling a work and using private break based on their need are not possible. Therefore, the question 'who decide and control the working hours?' and 'how much employees can control their own working hours under which conditions?' have been contentious issues regarding the 'right to control time' (Jeon et al., 2016:225-226).

When considering the statistical fact that Korea has one of the longest working hours in the world, it is reasonable to think most of Korean employees are recognizing their excessive working-hour. Interestingly, previous study shows that even though Korean employees work more than their comparative group does within the study, it turned out that smaller number of them (20.6%) compared to their counterparts (31%) thought their working-hour is too long (Shin, 2009:190). Although they work way longer than those in other countries, the degree of awareness about the problem of long working-hour is lower than those with shorter working hours (ibid:193). This result implies the important relationship between 'employees' previous experience in larger context' and 'their desire for time'. If they are already used to working long hours and have little experience of controlling their own time (Kim, 2014:5), the possibility of recognizing their own desire for (more) time will be low (Shin, 2009:195).

From here, it shows that the perception of employees is constructed by their surroundings; which means, what they have experienced within larger social context becomes the basis of their own perspectives and personal choices related to labor issues. Unlike discourses which explained the long working hours as a result of individual preference or choices, considering what are the situational variables which forces those preference and choices should be considered first (Kim, 2014:16). Especially, when there are 'cultural pressure' which forces certain phenomenon or ideology, it will not be easy to escape from that context which formulates individual perspectives even when they cannot notice it (Kodz et al., 1998, cited in Kim, 2014:16). It can be assumed that contextual variables play an important role for shaping each individual's perception, not only in an individual level but also in an organizational level.

This study (Shin, 2009) implies the fundamental reason why repetitive attempts by government to reduce working hours have not been successful so far, particularly in reducing actual working hours. They have been approached to the problem without considering what is actually out there in reality; about why those changes cannot be settled down in workplaces and what makes employees stay in the same place where they need to stay late in their office. Especially, as precedent studies found that long working-hour problem in Korean is significantly based on its unique work culture (Kim et al., 2018; Bader et al., 2018; Zhang & Seo, 2018; Hemmert, 2012), how the work culture impacted on employees'

perception on work ethics and their behavior has been missed in existing political attempts. If there is no profound understanding about how employees perceive their working environment, it cannot be settled down as an 'adequate' policy even the regulation has been improved in many ways.

1.2   Purpose of study and Research question

In the light of previous section, it was able to see that individual Korean employees make decisions which are highly affected by contextual factors above the individual level. This is an important implication to resolve long working-hour problem of Korea, because it means the cause of fixed long working-hour problem should be found not on the 'individual choices' but based on 'how context plays a role in the process of making their choices'. As mentioned before, private break is neither a clearly defined legal terminology in Korean LSA nor commonly used concept in Korean workplaces; using private break generally depends on the individual employee's decision in principle (Korean Labor Standard Act). However, at the same time this is why observing private break can provide more honest reaction of employees about how they are using private break which is under their own discretion. In this respect, in the light of theoretical framework which focuses on the social context around individual choices, formulating questions asking about their work environment and private break usage were thought to provide a clue for understanding people's perception on long working-hour problem and how it is formulated.

The purpose of this study is to explore Korean employees' own experience how they are using private break in their workplace and which contextual factors interrelate with it. Accordingly, this study aims to answer the following research questions;

- How does the social context impact on private break usage of Korean employees?

Answering this main question requires these additional subquestions:

- What are the commonly found contextual factors of the work environment in Korean workplaces?

- How do Korean employees use private breaks at work?

- How do contextual factors affect individuals' decisions to take a private break?

2   Background on the Korean context

In this chapter, more explicit background of problem area will be presented. Starting with working culture of Korea, how government has made legal changes to working time will be illustrated. In the final section, the 'private break', which is the main focus of this study, will be subjectively defined based on the previous background.

2.1   Working culture of Korea

Korea is often described with its intrinsic working culture, especially which is deeply rooted in the national culture (Kim et al., 2018; Bader et al., 2018; Zhang & Seo, 2018; Hemmert, 2012). It is not easy to draw one clear map of what is included in it because Korean working culture is the result of complex interrelations of history, politics and culture. Even it is not easy to grasp at once, it is thought to be important to have a general background to understand issues within Korean working culture better. Therefore, here the study by Kim et al. (2018) which summarized complex components of Korean working culture will be presented to provide general background on the Korean context.

Recognizing the limitation of previous working-hour research, which is mainly built on western culture and does not sufficiently explain Korean case, Kim et al. conducted their study to see 'How do Korean employees perceive their working hours?' and 'What are the causes of long working hours in the Korean cultural context?' (2018:38). Based on relevant literature, they presented main characteristics of Korean culture - strict hierarchy, high collectivism, strong cohesion, Confucianism, strong work ethic, loyalty and the importance of harmony (p. 37). Related to this, Korean organizational culture is described as more complicated - authoritarian and paternalistic leadership, hierarchical structure, loyalty and frequent ad hoc tasks (ibid).[1]

To examine the phenomenon of long working-hour by interviewing Korean employees, they mainly focused on how national culture of Korea is related to work context (p. 38). They extracted 4 main themes from the answer of interviewees (p. 41-45). *Affirmative attitude*, which defined as 'an employee's willingness to accept long working hours or overtime-related behaviors based on individual norms or work ethic', showed shared norms and work ethic are

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[1] Particularly, it is often described with a typical feature of Korean culture "Bbali bbali (quickly quickly)" in related studies since it has to be done in a rush (Bader et al., 2016; Hemmert, 2012).

strongly affected by context of employees' workplace. Since 'being diligent' by staying late at the office and working longer than normal hours are expected as a 'good worker', many interviewees has internalized the expectation as the basis of choosing working long hours (p. 42). *Group cohesiveness*, which favors 'the group's common good, teamwork and unity over individuality', presented as a way of social support within groups. Waiting for coworkers after finishing their own work and semi-mandatory participation to coffee or smoking break and chats were observed (p. 43). *Power dynamics* means asymmetric power relations especially between supervisor and subordinates (p. 43). Interviewees had to wait until their superiors left the office since they thought if they leave earlier than their superiors it will negatively impact on their performance evaluation. Also, this unequal power dynamics appears as 'frequent ad hoc tasks' by superiors, which resulted in heavy workload and staying late at work. *Inefficient routines and systems* refer to unproductive and vague work manuals of tasks, which eventually end up with working longer hours than usual (p.44). Since employees recognize invisible organizational norms such as vertical hierarchy between superiors and subordinates, most of them could not raise a problem worrying that it might impact on their performance assessment.

Their study showed that there is strong correlation between the cultural context and how employees perceive their work environment. Furthermore, it naturally brings its focus on the importance of understanding contextual factors around working-hour issues which has been left behind in other studies. In the next paragraph, then what has been in the priority in other researches considering how to resolve the long working-hour problem will be presented; which is legal changes, more specifically the amendment of Korean Labor Standard Act.

2.2   Legal changes to working time

'A life with evenings that we can spend on family, free time and self-improvement' is one of the most frequently mentioned phrases in Korea recently. The most intuitive reason why this phrase is being used as such a 'wish' of many Koreans can be found in their working life. According to the survey of office workers from *Job Korea*,[2] 61.3% of them cannot leave the work when their office hour is over (Newsis, 2018). To the question why they cannot leave on time, almost half of the respondents answered that they mind their coworkers' reaction when they leave on time. Especially, 34.8% of respondents answered because they wait until their superiors leave the office. The result of this survey shows why many people are longing for free usage of time after work.

This habitual so-called 'long working-hour culture' in Korea is not a new phenomenon. Korea has been one of the countries where workers work for the

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[2] One of the main online job platforms in Korea (https://www.jobkorea.co.kr).

longest hours in the world for many years. As a solution of this situation, the statutory working-hour has been reduced by several legal attempts, especially by amending the Korean Labor Standard Act (LSA). In 1953, LSA was firstly enacted by regulating statutory working hours as 8 hours a day and 48 hours per week (Kim, 2016:1). In 1989, statutory working hours per week was reduced from 48 hours to 44 hours, and once again it was reduced to 40 hours in 2003, which is the same standard with current regulation (ibid). However, the problem had remained how to deal with ambiguous interpretation of 'working hours' in the legislation remained as a problem (Lee, 2009:117). What does 'a week' for normal working days exactly refers to - 5 working days (Monday to Friday) or 7 days (including 5 working days and weekend) was not clearly stated in the LSA, the administrative interpretation on statutory working hours had been always in the middle of the controversy (S. Lee, 2018:15). It enabled companies or employers an arbitrary interpretation and manipulation of actual working hours of their employees, and this has been one of the reasons why the long working-hour is still prevalent in the society (Lee, 2009:124-125).

In this respect, the recent amendment of LSA which was enforced from the 1st of July in 2018 tried to specify how to interpret 'a week' for normal working days, and accordingly declared '52 hours' as a maximum working hours per week, include extra working hours (S. Lee, 2018:14). Furthermore, ensuring the workers' rights to seek 'work-life balance' in their life was presented as a long-term goal in this amendment (Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2018a). However, many people still raise a question whether 'reducing statutory working-hour' can be a fundamental solution or not. Some argues that as long as long working-hour culture cannot be changed, just reorganizing legal system cannot effectively reduce 'actual' working hours (Yu, 2010:72). Of course, amending laws is a necessary step to establish a foothold for reducing working hours. However, more than systematic reorganizations, further efforts which can impact on the perception of people and their practice should be considered in advance of legal changes (Kang, 2006:156).

2.3   Defining the 'private break'

In the previous section, reviewing Korean cultural context and legal changes strengthened the main argument of this study, which is understanding the process of individual decisions resulting long working-hour should be considered to make significant change of actual working hours of Korea. More specifically, how individual behavior and choices are affected by contextual factors within workplaces needs to be explored more specifically. In this respect, the 'private break' was selected as a means of observing real life experience of employees to see how their choices and decisions are made while interrelating with much broader context. Further than what has been taken for granted about private break, this study aims to subjectively define private break and use it for observing contextual interrelations which is also highly related to long working-hour as well.

The specific definition of private break in this study will allow clearer understanding about what this study aims to focus on.

According to the Korean Labor Standard Act (LSA), employers must provide 30 minutes of break for 4 hours of work and 1 hour of break for 8 hours of work to their employees. Generally, this 'legal break time' is used as a lunch break in many Korean workplaces (Noh & Choi, 2013:75). Employees should be able to use this time depends on their needs, but it does not mean they can have unconditional freedom on using that time. For the maintenance of order, the location and the way of using it can be limited such as assigning the place to rest or prohibiting behavior irrelevant to work (ibid). On the other hand, 'private break' is not clearly defined in legislation. Only 'standby time', when employees are actually not working but they are under the supervision of their employer and being ready to go back to work shortly, is stated in legislation (Korean Labor Standard Act).

In practice, standby time is distinguished with private break, short-term personal breaks of employees. In one of the study, Korean employees are using private break as a short conversation with colleagues and going for smoking or drinking coffee (Kim et al., 2018:43). Even though both 'private break' and 'standby time' are mainly used on non-work-related activities, this type of break is classified within the working hours according to Korean case law and administrative interpretation (Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor, 2018b; J. Lee, 2018; Noh & Choi, 2013:74) since employees need to stay under the supervision of their employer and ready to get back to work immediately (T. Park, 2018).

According to Roland Paulsen (2015), there have been very few studies on non-work-related behaviors (which are defined as 'empty labor' in his book) and even fewer studies conducted by non-management perspective in general. Managers and management scholars often only focus on 'how to improve the productivity by effectively regulating the non-work-related behaviors of employees' (Noh & Choi, 2013:72-73). Therefore, it tends to lump all of them together regardless of different purpose and usage between private break and on work-related behaviors. Considering that, it might quite hard to understand the difference between this specific definition of private break and everything else employees do not exactly related to their work.

Different from existing perspectives, this study argues that the concept of private break needs to be separated from 'empty labor', in terms of emphasizing the 'right on time' of employees to decide when to use their break (ILO, 2008). As it will be presented more closely in the later part of this study, this study will not focus on a fact-finding investigation such as how much time employees are wasting on Social media. Rather, how they are using and controlling the time while being affected by specific work context will be the main interest of this study. Therefore, *private break* is defined as an independent concept in this study as 'multiple times of short-term break of employees within workplaces, which are perceived by themselves as resting time under their own control and decisions', based on their 'right on time' to decide when to use private break.

3   Literature review

In this chapter, how existing studies have approached to the long working-hour problem of Korea will be analyzed. As the initiative of this study starts with acknowledging the absence of focusing on the individual perspective, it will mainly discuss how existing studies formulated their research topic, how they could improve their arguments and their implication to this study. It will be divided into three different sections according to their main research focus; about Korean working culture, the impact of long working-hour and the recent amendment of Korean Labor Standard Act.

3.1   Korean working culture

To answer the research question 'what really makes employees to work long hours', Zhang & Seo (2018) conducted survey towards 200 superior-subordinate dyads from 120 Korean private companies which has at least 30 employees (p. 1231, 1239-1240). They have a quite similar ambition of study to what this study wants to explore. Based on the social information processing theory,[3] they particularly focused on 'employees' organizational social context' and tried to examine 'social contextual antecedents' which causes long working hours (p. 1231-1232). The strength of this study is not only in sorting out characteristics of Korean working culture, but they also formulated contextual causal relationship while encompassing the cultural background (p. 1247-1250). Their study provided scholarly insights which allowed this study to narrow down its focus into the private break of individual employees while adopting their theoretical framework. Also, by selecting less participants but using more in-depth qualitative method, individual interviews, it aimed to get more descriptive answers from employees to understand their actual experiences in workplace.

Their study is in the same line with what Kim et al. (2018) did, which was presented in the earlier section.[4] The main implication of their study is taking account of employees' experiences in terms of work environment and inherent work culture which was often excluded in the existing studies. Different from other studies which either pointed out the limitation of the LSA amendment or focused on how long working-hour affects the employees' attitude and their work-

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[3] Since this study will utilize their theoretical framework, it will be presented in detail in the next chapter (3.1. Social information processing theory).
[4] 2.1. Working culture of Korea

life balance, they could explore more honest thoughts and feelings of Korean employees for studying how national culture affects the long working-hour problem by using qualitative interview method. Nevertheless, as the main purpose of study was providing more effective solutions in HRD (Human Resource Development) perspective, it could not fully emphasize how individual perception itself should be importantly dealt in the problem resolving process (p. 38). For this reason, this study takes different perspective from theirs which underlines employees' perspective, while utilizing their research framework which brought individual experiences into Korean long working-hours culture research.

Kang (2006) widened the focus from Korean context towards comparative study with Germany about the relation between work ethic and working hours. He specified different types of work ethic in terms of 'what is being pursued by labor', for example achievement, relations and life (p. 136). His study showed that how employees perceive their labor was not always correlated to their actual working hours. Their perception about working-hour was more related to how they perceive 'work' itself (work ethic), rather than how long do they work. In his analysis, Korean employees perceived their work as a way of maintaining a livelihood, which means they have an instrumental relationship with work (p. 143). On the contrary, German employees had relatively higher sense of unity with their work, seeking their own accomplishment through work (ibid).

This difference resulted in different answers to the questions such as 'Are you willing to bear much longer overwork?' or 'Will you let work interfere the boundary of your private life?' (p. 146-147). Korean employees generally answered that they might accept longer working hours and blurred boundary of work and life if they can improve their living conditions (such as earning more money), while German employees were relatively negative about longer working hours and unclear work-life boundary. This result might not be a general picture of the perception of Korean and German employees, because personal traits and tendencies cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, his study has its significance of showing the perception of employees matters more than numerical indexes (hours of work), and the national context as a structural problem has a strong impact on employees' perception (p. 154).

Kang's study is related to Bader et al. (2018) which studied how German expatriates in Korea experience cross-cultural challenges in terms of their work-life boundaries, studying comparative aspects of Korea and Germany. Using boundary theories, considering the boundary as 'mental fences' which differentiate different domains of everyday life especially in the work and private domain, they interviewed 28 German expatriates who are working in Seoul, Korea (p. 3, 10). They mainly focused on how German employees in Korea perceive work-life boundary pressure in the foreign environment and their willingness to adjust to local work-life boundary culture (p. 6-7). Based on their findings through interviews, they formulated typology of four work-life boundary adjustment styles and related them to their work-life balance satisfaction (p. 18-23). As they purposefully selected two different cultural domains in terms of work-life segmentation/integration, which are Germany and Korea, contrasting features of work culture from each country have been stood out more effectively. For

example, German interviewees felt quite strong pressure when they are asked to rush in the work, do overwork, have lots of social obligations towards peers and business partners and when they are interrupted their private time by work (p. 18-21).

Their study shed light on the different cultural effects on foreign workers in Korea and there are significant insights which this study can benefit from. By studying two contrasting cultural subjects, it was much easier to understand how Korean national and organizational culture is intrinsic. As mentioned in Kim et al. (2018:36), existing labor-related researches are mostly based on western domain which cannot sufficiently explain Korean context. In this manner, Bader et al. could open a new horizon of working culture research while introducing comparative perspectives of German and Korean case on work-life boundary. Also, they brought empirical dimensions to study how German expatriates experience and perceive their working experiences, by conducting in-depth interviews. Their experience in a qualitative methodology ensured that interviews can be adequate option to get participants' own descriptions about their life experience (Roulston, 2010:11 of ch.1), and gave significant insights to design and conducting current study.

3.2   The impact of long working hours

There have been attempts to investigate how working long hours impacts on employees at work and their work-life balance, and many of precedent studies focused on the negative impact of long working-hour (Kim, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2018; Kang, 2012; Sung & Jeon, 2018; Lee & Kang, 2018; Jeon et al., 2016). Sung & Jeon (2018) focused on the relations between long working-hour and job exhaustion, turnover intention and innovative behavior in workplace. In their research, longer working-hour was directly related to job exhaustion and the turnover intention. One of the hypotheses they made in the beginning of their study. 'If workers have high satisfaction of their work-life balance, can it offset the negative effects of longer working hour?', was turned out not to be true (ibid: 635-636). Even though this study revealed that working long-hour has noticeable impacts on employees' general work attitudes, using survey in their study could not provide in-depth description about how employees felt in those situations. Though the sample size can be smaller than the survey, conducting in-depth interviews with employees will provide more description about the actual workplaces. Realizing this limitation, this study try to observe more descriptive answers about employees' perceptions and thoughts by approaching with qualitative interview method.

More than approaching to the direct impact of long working-hours, Lee & Kang (2018) focused on the difference among generations in the relationship between work-life balance and life satisfaction. Their study showed that work-life balance has positive impact on life satisfaction since it alleviates the tension between 'role in work' and 'role in family' (p. 281). In terms of generations, life

satisfaction increased in all generations when they have higher level of work-life balance (p. 283). Their study has its contribution to show how long working-hour can be related to work-life balance, and how work-life balance can be related to the general life satisfaction of people. Since the result was applied to all generations, their study emphasized the importance of reducing long working-hour once more and implied people's life satisfaction and their improved well-being should be pursued as a goal of reducing actual working hours.

3.3   The amendment of Korean Labor Standard Act

Reducing or making clear legal definition on working-hour always has been the most important issue as a solution to approach long working-hour problem. Until now, analyzing the amendment of LSA and discussing which part has main improved and whether it can be effective or not were actively studied in existing studies. Yu (2010) tried to analyze what can be improved through LSA amendment especially about the flexible working-hour system. In the flexible working-hour system, if the average working-hour does not exceed the statutory working-hour, it is acceptable in a legal sense even working-hour of certain days exceed its statutory standard (Yu, 2010:71; Kim, 2016:6). As there are industry sectors which cannot meet fixed working-hour due to their job characteristics, flexible working-hour system can be used for more flexible working conditions and environments of employees. At that moment of his study, the main discussion was about whether the unit of period for flexible working-hour system should be extended or not; from two weeks to one month and from three months to one year respectively for weekly and monthly unit of time (Yu, 2010:71).

At the same time, flexible working-hour system has been blamed for allowing 'lawful overtime' since the law only cares about the average working-hour (ibid). Yu pointed out that as long as long-working hour culture cannot be changed, only reorganizing legal system cannot be in accordance with actual implementation (p. 72). He showed how the deficiency of policy can yield a negative manipulation as a result. His findings are lied in the same line with the aim of this study that understanding and reflecting the reality for successful policy development should be the priority.

In a way of benchmarking successful examples of other countries, there was an attempt to compare how other countries are maintaining their own working-hour regulations with Korean case. Kim (2016) focused on flexible working-hour system in the US and Japan, analyzing how those countries have been through several improvements and what are significant lessons for Korean case. His main argument was that working-hour should be flexible depending on work environment which is given to each employee, to maximize their work-life balance (p. 2, 7). To achieve this, he said the old rules of fixed working-hour regulation which cannot consider the difference of industries needs to be reformed (p. 13). This study pointed out the ineffectiveness of uniform regulations, focusing on the employees' usage of working-hour. However, the main focus was still

remained on 'how to improve the policies and its justification', marginalizing the reality where employees have difficulties of actually applying those changes. As we saw in the previous study (Yu, 2010), amending only the legal regulations based on literal justification has a risk of yielding unexpected backfire as a result. Therefore, the importance of carefully considering how the reality around policy amendment can be included is emphasized once more.

Similar to what Kim (2016) did, N. Lee (2018) studied how Japan has been approached the long working-hour problem. Japan used to be one of the countries which has longest working-hour. As a country where the concept of 'death from overwork' firstly comes from, Japan has many similar features with Korea in terms of labor culture and work ethic (Kim, 2018:60). Even though it has way less average annual working-hour per worker (1,729 hours) than Korea (2,285 hours), it is because of the increasing number of temporary or part time job positions (ibid:217). If the same index is calculated with regular permanent positions of workers, it exceeds over 2,000 hours in the same conditions (ibid). Bearing this background, she focused on how discourses around overtime have been made in Japan. Not only considering long working-hour due to overtime as a cause of low productivity, it looked further ahead by approaching with the idea of 'living time of employees' (ibid:237-238). In this approach, 'time after work is initially belong to employees' is more strongly emphasized, creating further opportunity to think about where time belongs to and who decide to use it. Her study implies that the solution for the same problem can be different according to the perspective or the discourse around that problem, which is connected to how Kim (2011) specified the 'time discourse analysis' in the theoretical framework of this study.

4   Theoretical framework

Research questions raised by previous literatures varied within the similar study purpose, which is finding a solution for long working-hour problem in Korea. Reviewing existing discussions enabled to see what is still missing in the previous researches, and two specific theories were selected in order to supplement those missing points and draw a theoretically embedded analytical framework for this study. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the 'social information processing theory' will support the argument why the social context around employees should be importantly analyzed in terms of affecting individual choices. Add to that, the 'time discourse analysis' will supplement the connection between research subject and theoretical framework, by bringing Korean context into analytical framework. Reflecting these theoretical discussions, how it was applied to the empirical part of this study will be presented in the last section.

4.1   Social information processing theory

In the *Social information processing theory*, Salancik & Pfeffer (1978) emphasized the importance of 'the effects of context' and 'the consequences of past choices' to understand individuals' work attitudes and behaviors (ibid:224). They assumed that individuals develop their perception and attitudes based on the information accumulated overtime. Therefore, to understand why those behaviors occurred in that particular context, informational and social environment which situationally constraints them need to be studied (ibid:226). The social context, where the need and behavior of individuals are expressed, guides to socially acceptable beliefs and reasons for action, and enables expectations regarding individual's behavior about what will be the logical consequence to be an one's behavior (ibid:227).

There are several significant points in their study which compose the theoretical basement of this study. Firstly, they focused on the fact that jobs are often 'complex stimuli', which makes workers confused within these 'multidimensional components' (ibid:229). In this confusing situation, the way how others evaluate will be the cue what will be the proper reaction or behavior within the organization. Likewise, while verbally agreeing on others to 'fit in' the group, individuals will eventually convince him/herself by their own repeated agreements to others (ibid). This infers the general process of how individuals within groups internalize shared values and norms of that organization, even when they initially did not fully agree on certain subjects.

Second, the concept of 'rationalizing process' or 'process of legitimizing behavior', explains that how certain behavior can be rationalized by referring features of that environment and how norms and expectations within the environment support the rationalization of developed behaviors (ibid:231). Being 'rationalized' also means being 'acceptable', which means the justification is reasonable and not only to the person who did that but also to others. But again, since this is the process intertwined with context and interactions of people within that context, the question 'under what conditions certain forms of justification are used' is being important to devote more time on it (ibid:232).

Third, they also examined the direct effect of social information and pressures on 'conformity' - the degree of cohesiveness will decide how much the attitudes from members of the group can vary (ibid:238). If the group has strong level of cohesiveness, it has higher possibility of having less varying attitudes of group members towards the same subject in the group. Of course, the importance of individual variables cannot be ignored, since they might produce more sophisticated units of possible scenarios. Though, they pointed out it should not be forgotten that the effectiveness of generally overarching atmosphere of the social context on individual attitudes has strong correlation with individual perception (ibid:239).

Finding what causes the long working-hour culture in Korea has been one of the main research topics of precedent studies. Among their arguments, the main focus of this study is drawn on the opposition of those who argue that working long hours and social discourse which supports it are the result of 'personal choice' (Kim, 2014:16). They argue that no one can judge or stop their own decisions since employees have chosen by themselves to work more for higher income or fulfilling their self-satisfaction. However, as we could see in the social information processing approach, the impact of social context on individuals' perception, attitudes and behaviors should not be ignored when we think about their causal relations. Therefore, understanding long working-hour problem of Korea based on the impact of social context should be the first step to approach the existing problem.

4.2   Time discourse analysis

To provide Korean context to the social information processing theory, *Time discourse analysis* by Kim (2011) will take another part of the theoretical framework. In his book, he categorized how managerial discourses have shaped the meanings and characteristics of vacations from work, focusing on how 'time' was perceived within discourses (Kim, 2011:305). He said the current meanings and characteristics of vacation is the result of socially constructed discourses, which have been varied depends on historical context and situational conditions (ibid:305, 307). Unlike other studies which approached to Korean working-hour issues in terms of cultural or organizational impacts, this approach has its strength on taking account of each individual employees' perspective. By acknowledging

this aspect, researching working-hour and overwork problem can possess a possibility of more in-depth perspective, overcoming the limitation of other studies which only focused on the feasible aspects (ibid:307). Accordingly, his analytical view enables to see the need to understand employees' experience related to their working hours and which social and situational conditions are surrounding their experience.

As a typical example of his argument, Kim (2011) clearly presented that the formation of discourse and followed creation of reality have a great impact on how Koreans about the definition and usage of vacation. The broad division of how vacation was defined in Korean society can be found before and after the economic crisis on 1997 (p. 92). Before the economic crisis, suppressing the free time of employees was mainly discussed in the vacation discourse. After the crisis and until now, how to use the vacation 'strategically' to benefit work productivity is more emphasized especially from the employers' side. The vacation has not been distributed as a 'guaranteed right of employees' but has been provided based on the work achievement of employees, the logic of 'strengthening competitiveness' and 'enhancing the productivity' were naturally emphasized (p. 91). Based on this discourse formation, vacation cannot be seen as somewhat employees can autonomically use for their self-satisfaction, and even the territory of the private free time was dragged into reproductive process of enhancing work competitiveness (p. 91-92).

In his analysis, it is able to see how individual rights and choices of employees have been constrained and rationalized without a thorough understanding by bigger social structure and discourses. His experience of analyzing working-hour issue in the Korean context, especially about vacation discourse based on his time discourse analysis, provides the supplementary theoretical perspective how the frame of social information processing theory can be applied to the Korean context. In this respect, this study will apply his analytical frame of time discourse into another aspect of employees' experience, the private break. More detailed description how this theoretical framework will be applied to the concept of private break will be presented in the following section.

4.2.1 Applying 'time discourse analysis' on the 'private break'

The specific focus of this study is on the 'private break' of Korean employees in their workplace. In the 'Resolution concerning the measurement of working time' by ILO (2008), "resting time" is defined as 'time spent in short periods of rest' with refreshment activities such as drinking coffee or tea, which is 'practiced by custom or contract according to established norms and/or national circumstances (p. 43). In Korean LSA, private break (which is basically the same concept with resting time in ILO resolution) has not been clearly defined as another type of resting time or break in a regulation. Therefore it has caused confusion among employers and employees whether it is included as part of working hours or not. Combining with the concept of 'ideal employee', which

considers employee working longer hours as a desirable one who sacrifices himself/herself (Kim, 2014:16), this vague definition made employees reluctant to autonomously use their private break.

There are two aspects of private break in Korean workplaces. One is that although the private break should be a 'private' break which employees can decide when and how to use it within the acceptable boundary, one empirical study showed that using private break is highly affected by others in workplace (Kim et al., 2018:43). As smoking or drinking coffee together is perceived as 'building good peer relationship', one interviewee answered that it is hard to refuse those offers even though their own work process is interrupted (ibid). Another aspect is the control from workplace - as new amendment for 52 hours of statutory working-hour has been released, some workplaces are trying to regulate their employees' private break for using toilet, drinking coffee or tea and smoking (Park & Kang, 2018). While some agree on this regulation since there are people who are using those times excessively resulting negative impact on their work attitude, others argue that regulating private times is realistically impossible and it is very difficult to draw a clear boundary which is acceptable or not (Park & Kang, 2018). Contrary to the initial purpose of private break refreshing employees to increase their work productivity, it is either influenced by others when and how to use it or regulated by the employers' control.

The time used for private break only takes small part of employees' working hours. However, as Kim showed in his argument by focusing on the specific example of vacation, observing the example of employees' private break will effectively show the interrelation between individual behavior and contextual factors. More specifically, by utilizing Kim's argument it will allow to explore how discourses impact on contextual factors formulating specific rules and norms. By observing the small unit of working hours, analysis based on the empirical cases will draw a further inference on how long working-hour issue should be approached. Without considering the reality how employees are experiencing their time usage, it might be hard to expect reducing working hours which is the ultimate purpose of recent amendment of the Korean LSA. Therefore, taking the time discourse analysis of Kim to understand better the Korean context based on the social information processing theory will help to actual experiences of employees and find implications to resolve the long working-hour problem.

4.3　Analytical framework

[Figure 1] shows how the theoretical framework based on the social information processing theory and time discourse analysis was visualized in the light of the argument of this study.

[Figure 1] Visualization of theoretical framework
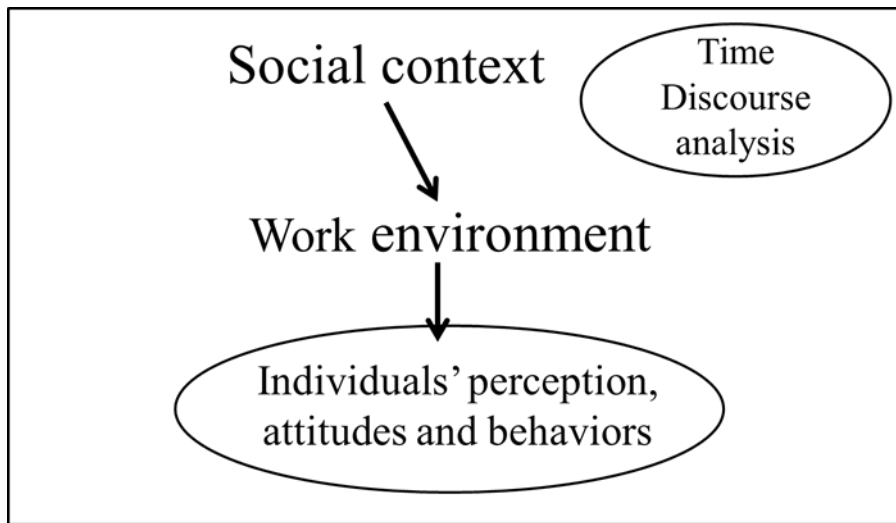
The theoretical framework is also related to how the interview guide was formulated. To systematically extract themes in the experience of interview participants', interview questions were formulated in reference to each degree in the theoretical framework. [Table 1] presents the example how questions were initially formulated in the interview guide[5] (As 'work environment' thought to be closely connected with 'social context' in Korean workplace, related questions were presented under both of them).

[Table 1] The example of interview guide based on the theoretical framework
Social context

Social context	- Who is sitting next to you? Where does your superior sit in the office? Is there any specific rule for seat arrangement?
Work environment	- How often do you need to cooperate with peers in your team? - How would you describe the organizational atmosphere at work in terms of hierarchy?
Individuals' perception, attitudes and behavior	- Can you independently decide how to use the time at work? - Do you decide when and how to use private break by your own need? - When you were suggested or forced to have private break when you do not want to, have you said 'no' to those offers?

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[5] Full interview guide can be found in the Appendix 2.

5   Research method

In this chapter, the methodology used in this study is discussed in the following order. Firstly, the benefit of qualitative research based on constructivism and interpretivism in relation to the research question will be explained. Secondly, how this study constructed its own interview research method and how it can benefit the data collection of this study will be discussed. Thirdly, detailed information about sampling process and the description of samples will be presented. Lastly, some reflections on the method will be followed.

5.1   Qualitative research method

This study takes *constructivism* (similarly referred as anti-foundationalism or relativism) as an ontological position. In constructivist ontological position, the researcher sees the reality is socially constructed, and the views of individuals are shaped by social, political and cultural processes (Lowndes, et al., 2018:183). Related to this, the epistemological position of this study will be placed on *interpretivism*, which takes interpretation or understanding within discourses, contexts and traditions as the main value of study (ibid:190). This perspective is aware of that researcher's partialities and reflexivity have important roles in drawing conclusion of study (ibid:190-191). Some argue that studying context-oriented social phenomenon which is limited within time, space and only some actors is one of the main shortcomings of interpretivist approaches (ibid:191-192). However, even though what this perspective conclude is 'pragmatically acceptable claims about how the world really works', it is thought to be still useful to show how the world which surrounds social phenomenon is constructed while being aware of where our inclination faces (ibid:191).

Qualitative research is not often defined as single way of approach, but it covers wide range of approaches which do not rely on numerical measurements (King et al., 1994:4). Even if it is generally focuses on one or a small number of cases by using methods such as intensive interviews or depth analysis, they produce enormous amounts of information from their studies (ibid). During the process of study, the qualitative researcher is not satisfying with studying a single phenomenon but tries to generate 'many qualitative-interpretive, within-case 'observations'' which demonstrate more than superficially observable phenomenon (Lowndes et al., 2018:244). It is often contrasted with its counterpart, quantitative research, which mainly deals with numbers and statistical methods (King et al., 1994:3). Based on those comparatively objective figures, it aims to

seek general description or test causal hypotheses (ibid). It is been quite a long debate between advocates of each research method; some argue that qualitative research has its limitation in terms of the reliability of used data and replicability of their research process, while quantitative research has been blamed for ignoring the difference of social world and human behavior compared to physical subject based on statistics (ibid:4).

Even though ongoing debates about which research method is better than the other one, choosing the best research method for this study was not lied on the 'superiority' of one method. Rather, in the process of research design, which method is more relevant and has more strength to answer the research question, was considered as a primary condition to choose a research method (ibid:5-6). As the main purpose of this study was not finding out causal relations or generally applicable theory in the light of interpretivist approach, large number of cases or numerical statistics were not required in the first place (Lowndes et al., 2018:243). To provide understanding of how people experience and perceive social context by interpreting meanings within data based on the constructivist approach (ibid:244), research method which allow them construct their own view can capture their own descriptive perceptions thought to be appropriate to be used. Therefore, in-depth individual interview was chosen as the main data collection method, which is one of the typical methods for conducting qualitative researches (King et al., 1994:4).

5.2   Interview

To meet the main purpose of this study, individual interviews with Korean employees were used to understand their own perception about using private break and social context which impacts on the process of their choices. In this section, how this study constructed its own interview method and what are its components will be explained. Firstly, I go through the general description of interview methods and its implication on this study. Afterwards, what are the unique components of interview method of this study will be gone through.

The strength of interview can be found on the belief that interviewees are 'who actively construct their social worlds' and can verbally communicate insights about their social world (Ritchie et al., 2014:55). In other words, it enable researcher to get insights about individuals' lives or views through an active verbal communication (ibid). Since the aim of this study is focusing on how employees perceive their work context and their experiences related to private break, interviewing individuals had been expected to provide information which can be used for fulfilling the purpose of this study such as understandings, opinions, attitudes and feelings (Lowndes et al., 2018:246).

As this study stands with a constructivist ontological perspective, which sees the reality and individual perspectives are socially constructed, the interview process is also seen as constructive and transformative process based on the interaction between interviewer and interviewee (Ritchie et al., 2014:179). This

view is often criticized by who see the knowledge is already given and the role of interviewer is just 'digging it out' from interviewees, while questioning about the stability issue when the knowledge is considered as somewhat being constructed within the interview (ibid: 180). However, since it can 'include participants' explicit interpretations and understanding of events' which might not be extracted from fixed and immediate research interaction, the strength of this qualitative method was considered as the best way to satisfy what this study is looking for (ibid).

This study utilized unique combination of different interview method; which can be named 'semi-structured phenomenological telephone interview'. First of all, in a correlation with the epistemological position of this study (Roulston, 2010:2 of ch.1), interviews were conducted as *phenomenological interview* (ibid:11). The purpose of this type of interview is 'to generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences', which researchers want to understand the participants' feelings, perceptions and understandings on particular subject area (ibid). Under the research question which aims to understand how employees perceive their experience of private break and their work context, the description of their own perception and experiences from participants will generate the most meaningful data for this study. For this reason, the selection of interviewees was carefully undertaken while identifying if they have relevant experiences and ability to talk about it in their own words (ibid).

Secondly, to focus on letting participants' share their own life experiences, the interviews were conducted as *semi-structured interview*, with *interview guide*[6] which is consisted of prepared questions (ibid:8-9). The interview guide was prepared in advance of interview based on the theoretical framework of this study. Then, they were complemented by previous studies which also used interview method on the similar research topic and therefore helped to construct initial questions (Kim et al., 2018, Bader et al., 2018). Questionnaires were used to structure each interview, but they were not always asked in a same order. The manner of asking questions was initiated by interviewer based on the answers and descriptions of each interviewee (ibid). Most of the questions, except first few questions which asked about the background information of interviewees, were presented as open questions. Open questions are not just expected to have yes/no answers, single word or phrase (Ritchie et al., 2014:191, Roulston, 2010:4 of ch.1). Rather, it expects interviewees to formulate answers in their own words in a more descriptive manner (Roulston, 2010:5 of ch.1).

The questions were carefully formulated not to lead the participants' answers in a particular way. In the literature review, various previous studies have provided relatively strong assumptions on how Korean employees would feel about perceiving their daily experiences in workplaces. Even the main subject of study is similar with those precedent researches, the originality of this study can be found its perspective which focuses more on individuals' experience and contextual factors which are related to that. To enable this differentiation,

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[6] The interview guide can be found in the Appendix 2.

exploring more breadth and depth experience and perception of employees was required to be connected with the main research question. Therefore, using semi-structured interview which allows relatively free expression of participants' own feelings and experiences was the most important criterion in the interview preparation process (Ritchie et al., 2014:191).

Lastly, due to the practical reason, as the researcher conducted this study in Sweden, interviews were taken as *telephone interview* with interviewees who currently live and work in Korea. Face-to-face interview, which is regarded as the most general way of interview, has its strength that interviewer and interviewee can actually establish a good rapport and interviewer also can grasp 'non-verbal communication' of interviewee along with the verbal answers (ibid:182). In this regard, telephone interview is sometimes criticized that it cannot capture the body language or facial expressions which can indicate different connection to further information (ibid). However, the argument related to disadvantages of telephone interview compared to face-to-face one is not totally inclusive (ibid:182-183). Telephone interview is considered as different way of interviewing when the situation is not fully allowed to the researcher, for example scattered samples or the case of interviewing busy participants. Therefore, the difference of types of interviews was not considered as a major deficit in this study. Even though actual face-to-face interview was not possible due to the spatial limitation, using the online messenger program 'KakaoTalk'[7] enabled telephone interviews instead.[8]

5.3   Selection of samples

In this section, how sampling criteria were formulated to produce valid data will be firstly presented with sampling strategy. Afterwards, the size and detailed description of samples will be followed.

5.3.1   Sampling criteria and strategy

Thinking about the research question, which aims to understand individual experiences of Korean employees about using private break and their social context, many criteria were considered to draw clear boundary of sample selection. Since the work environment can vary depends on industries, companies, and tasks (and even more variables can appear than these), it was important to limiting

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[7] The most popular messenger program in Korea which provides calling function.
[8] Using Skype (telecommunications application that specializes in providing video chat and voice calls between such as computers and mobile devices, https://www.skype.com/) for face-to-face interview or telephone interview was considered in the early process of research design. However, due to frequent connection issues between interviewer and interviewees when using Skype, KakaoTalk which provided more stable voice call functions was chosen as the final technological option.

specific criteria to meet a enough quality of data (Roulston, 2010:10 of ch.4). Therefore, the selection process was initiated from purposive sampling strategy which covers the extent of the study and meets the purpose of study, as a form of criterion-based sampling process (Roulston, 2010:8 of ch.4; Ritchie et al., 2014:113; Lowndes et al., 2018:247). Accordingly, which criteria were used in the sampling process will be followed.

The first criteria is based on the theoretical framework of this study, to answer the main research question which is observing how social context is related to individual experiences of using private break. Accordingly, participants who are actually experiencing dynamic interactions in the workplace such as team-based tasks and peer relationships were firstly considered. In this regard, sample selection is limited only for white-collar workers. Even though the concept of 'white-collar' is not scholarly defined terminology, many scholars defined it as a similar way how Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor did (Gu, 2015:178-179). According to Korean Ministry of Employment and Labor (2018c), white collar workers refer to those who are working in the office which is separated from construction site and work for such as general office affairs, human resource affairs, accountancy and designing. Since they need to cooperate with peers and superiors while staying mostly in the same place, it thought to be much easier to observe what types of contextual influences they get and how they perceive them. By doing so, observing and comparing different experiences were expected under the similar work characteristic.

The second criterion is in the line with findings of existing researches. In the research design process, it was able to see Korean employees are experiencing long working-hour problem and being controlled their time usage, and it is already prevalent in the whole society (Kim et al., 2018; Bader et al., 2018; Zhang & Seo, 2018). Based on this existing knowledge, collecting diverse data sources as much as possible thought to be necessary to understand Korean employees' experiences even under the limitation of small sample size (Ritchie et al., 2014:116). Therefore, selecting certain industry sector or organization was purposively avoided. Aiming diverse sample under same criteria was expected to provide the chance to see the full range of features associated with the purpose of study, as well as their different interdependencies (ibid). Also, since the study requests participants to share their honest perceptions and opinions, the possibility of creating uncomfortable atmosphere was considered when they know someone else in their organization is also participating in the same study. As a result, participant selection criteria were not limited more than a occupational division, in terms of white collar workers.

In addition to the sampling criteria, selecting sampling strategy which can supplement the limitation of location was needed.[9] Therefore, the *snowballing approach* was used to find adequate interview participants who are currently working in Korea. This approach generally means the way of sampling strategy

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[9] This study was conducted while the researcher stays in Sweden, even though the interest of study was on Korean employees.

utilizing people who have already been interviewed as a connection to find others who also fit the selection criteria (Ritchie et al., 2014:129). It is convenient and effective way when it is difficult to identify targeted population. However, since the new sample participants are generated through existing ones, the sample can be less diverse in the end (ibid). To complement this disadvantage of snowballing strategy, half of the interview participants (4 people) were selected through existing sample members who are not interviewed,[10] by asking them to identify others who also meet the sampling criteria (ibid). By doing so, the diversity of samples was able to be guaranteed and the accessibility to population was still ensured.

Another half of the sample was directly contacted through the researcher's contact list. It was possible because specifically 2 of them actually worked together in the same organization with the researcher before, and it was sure that they meet the aimed sample criteria. Of course, it was carefully reconsidered several times not to make this process as a 'convenience sampling', the sampling approach which solely based on 'who is available' (ibid:115). As the aim of study was clear and the sample selection criteria were made in advance of contacting process, evaluating if they meet the criteria and able to produce meaningful data for research purpose were always put in the first place.

5.3.2 Description of sample

As a result of sampling process, how many samples were collected and general description will be discussed in here. The total sample size of this study is consisted of 8 individual interview participants. It might seem quite small number of sample at first glance, especially compared to the sample size of quantitative study which generally requires much bigger number of samples. Ritchie et al. (2014) explained why qualitative samples are usually small in size (p. 117).

Firstly, there is a point where very few findings are obtained from each fieldwork unit when the data is properly analyzed. In the case of this study, there was also the point where the answers of participants were tied up within repeated information. Therefore, it was able to decide there is no use of growing the size of sample to collect meaningful data. Second, since the purpose of most qualitative research is not about providing statistical relevance, there is little concern about sufficient scale of samples. This was applied in a same manner on this study, since the purpose of study was not providing generalizable theory but understanding and describing individuals' experiences. Third, the information yielded from qualitative studies is rich in detail, therefore each segment of information needs to be carefully taken care of. Related to this, finally, analyzing qualitative data can be highly intensive. Therefore, hundreds of interviews or observations would simply be unimaginable and might not produce qualified data resources.

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[10] They are referred as 'connecting person' in this paper.

The small size of samples is a key characteristic of qualitative research (ibid:112). In this study, it enabled in-depth exploration of data and more room for multiple confirmation of analyzed data. Crucially, there was no such a significant deficiency for answering to the research question due to the size of samples. Since the correlation with the research aim should be the most important criterion of any choice of sampling strategy, there was no significant issue within this study process regarding the sample size. Based on that, [Table 2] and [Figure 2] provide general description of samples and relevant detailed information will follow.

[Table 2] The description of interview participants

Participant name (gender, age) - *Workplace (Private/public)* - *Position* - *Length of service (of total job experience)* - *Average working hours per week* - *Average frequency of daily private break*	
Participant A (M, 43) - Communication service company (private) - Deputy general manager - 16 years - 40 hours - 3 times	**Participant B** (F, 30) - Local government funded agency (public) - Senior - 3 years - 40 hours - Did not specify
Participant C (M, 30) -Local government Funded research institute (public) - Commissioned researcher (contract worker) - 4 months - 50 hours - 8 times	**Participant D** (F, 27) - Public institution - Staff (contract worker) - 3 years - 42.5 - 45 hours - Did not specify
Participant E (F, 37) - Quasi-government organization (public) - Senior researcher - 11 years - 47 - 48 hours - 4 - 6 times	**Participant F** (F, 27) - Incorporated association (private) - Staff - 6 months - 42 hours - 10 times
Participant G (M, 45) - Human resource consulting company (private) - General manager - 3 years (of 19 years) - 45 - 50 hours - 6 times	**Participant H** (F, 29) - Electronic appliances manufacturing company (private) - Staff - 3 years - 43 - 45 hours - 3 - 4 times

[Figure 2] Average working hours per week and average daily frequency of private break of interview participants
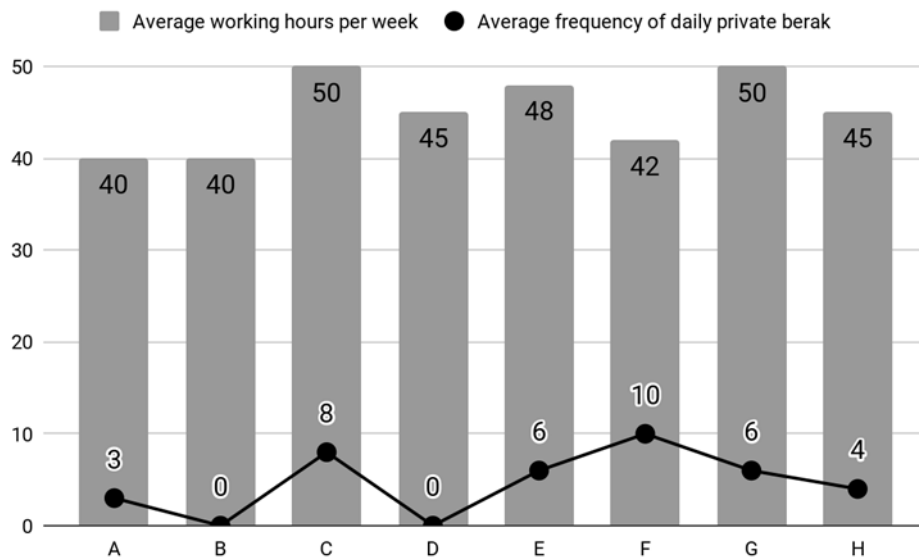
(Note: Among estimated working hours per week and frequency of daily private break by participants, the highest numbers of data were used in this graph. For those who could not specify the frequency of daily private break, the frequency is presented as 0 in this graph.)

Total 8 Korean employees who met sampling criteria were interviewed. [Table 2] is presenting the description of participants, which is thought to be relevant to see the variation of sample. There were 3 male and 5 female participants, 3 in their 20s, 3 in their 30s and the rest 2 in their 40s. 4 employees are from public sector and other 4 are from private sector. 3 participants (A, E, G) have more than 10 years of job experience (in terms of total job experience), other 3 have 3-years of length of service and the remainder have respectively 4 months and 6 months of length of service. The title of their position which is presented in the [Table 2] was not considered significantly in this study, since the position system is different and means different work duties depending on workplaces (among 8 participants, participant G was the only one who mentioned that he is in the managerial position). Most of the participants were not sure about their average working hours per week because of fluctuation of their workload and assigned work duties. Compared to the Korean statutory working-hour (8 hours a day for 5 days, maximum 52 hours per week include extra work), none of them answered their average working hours exceed the statutory standard. The medium working hours reported was 45 hours per week. Two of participants did not provide specific number of private break frequency, but in average participants were using 4.625 times of private break per day.[11]

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[11] The frequency of 2 participants who did not specify how many times they have private breaks a day was counted as having no private breaks. It was noted that one of them (participant B) answered she

5.4   Reflection on the method

Even though it has strengths as a methodology, qualitative research bears several inherent ethical issues (Ritchie et al., 2014:84). Among them, the reflection on the most relevant issues is presented here to identify limitations and potential bias of the empirical result. Firstly, fully describing the subject area in the light of theoretical framework has many difficulties since the long working hour-problem of Korean is already a very complex subject. Based on the argument of this study, it mainly tried to visualize the relationship between the social context and individual behaviors, while taking account of Korean context. It was also applied to formulating interview questions, but initial questions in the interview guide only worked as a guideline and actual significant data was produced in the interaction between interviewer and interviewees. Therefore it might not be clearly shown how the interview guide was formulated based on the theoretical framework.

When it comes to the interview, the difference of location between where the interview was conducted and where interview participants live was one of the challenges this study faced in the first place. Since flying all the way to Korean was not feasible option considering the time and economic limitation, selecting samples and practical interview method had to be reconsidered. Even the telephone interview did not produce any critical shortcomings in terms of getting reliable data, the question what if the researcher could actually meet the interview participant and observer their non-verbal nuances for more sophisticated observations still remains. Conducting 8 interviews in 20 days and transcribing within few days allowed direct reflection on the interview and development of interview in a more structured way. Interviewing and the transcribing in Korean was not a problem at all, but the limitation was recognized in data analysis when it is difficult to fully translate slight difference in the shade of meanings. Overall, it was very clear that the whole process of contacting, scheduling, conducting interviews and managing unexpected situations requires great interpersonal capabilities. As a first time interviewer, there might be unprofessional ways of handling other issues which was not specified in here.

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does not use such a break when she works, and the other (participant D) answered she uses private break very often so she could not provide specific number.

6   Data analysis

To be aligned with the purpose of study which focuses on real experience of Korean employees, interview data was gathered and analyzed based on the analytical framework. The following part illustrates the general description which data analysis strategy was used in this study. Detailed process of data analysis will be followed, and the result of analysis will be presented as 'themes'. In the final part, how the themes are interrelated and what is the implication will be discussed to answer the research question.

This study takes advantages of thematic analysis as the way of analyzing the data. Thematic analysis involves 'discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data' (Ritchie et al., 2014:271). By systematically working through the texts, the researcher tries to identify topics that are eventually classified under the 'high-order key themes' (ibid). This analytical approach is widely used because it does not limit itself within certain discipline or rules of theoretical constructs. That is why it is often criticized of being a 'generic method' rather than being an 'approach'. However, in other words this approach has a possibility of being applied in a variety of theoretical approach (ibid). Also, the main concern of researcher while he/she is analyzing data is lying on the 'ability to address the overall research question', not on the defining the approach itself. This study will apply this aspect of its strength to its data analysis.

As a part of 'substantive' approach, thematic analysis focuses on 'what the text says', while trying to capture and interpret meanings in the data (ibid:272). Through the data which treated as 'windows on the participants' social world', the research can observe feelings, perceptions and events in that world (ibid). It is significantly related to how this study wants to put its stance in terms of the ultimate aims of study. Under the great heading of qualitative research, there are different types of analysis approaches depend on 'the nature of research question and the purpose of the study' (ibid:274). Also, different qualitative research scholars argue that there are different degrees of the result from the analysis and they mostly prefer one particular way of product considering it as the most meaningful result. For example, some argue that there should be explanations in terms of 'deterministic causes', while others argue human behavior cannot be explained in the same way of physical world (ibid). Likewise, some argue that qualitative research should be able to contribute in terms of generating a new theory, while others think that 'testing' the hypothesis or taking existing theory into the process of developing concepts and categorizing themes and explanations is enough for finding the contribution of qualitative research (ibid).

The main stance of this study is in the line with the latter. By conducting semi-structured individual interviews, the researcher tried to capture detailed and

in-depth descriptions of participants' experiences. With the existing analytical tool, time discourse analysis, and the theory, social information processing theory, it used them for developing repeating themes within the data people generated in the interview. Concerning the way how 'people understand and give meaning to social world', explanations in terms of meanings or understandings were pursued rather than finding causal mechanisms (ibid:275). Therefore, it tried to look at how Korean employees actually perceive their working environments and usage of private breaks, while capturing repeated themes within the interview data. Accordingly, testing new hypothesis which aims to figure out causal relationship between particular social factors and human behavior was not regarded as an important focus of this study.

6.1 The process of analysis

There are three main steps of: getting familiarized with data, extracting themes from broader topics by indexing and sorting and finally applying theoretical framework to analyze findings. First and the foremost, 'familiarization' was taken as a first step to begin with the data analysis following the framework of thematic analysis (Ritchie et al., 2014:282). Grounded in the interview data, reviewing the transcribed texts and categorizing the topics were done in this stage. In this process, the researcher followed two main patterns. Firstly, the common contents of interview were found according to the similar interview questions. Loosely constructed but aimed the research question to maximize the strength of semi-structured interview, the interview guide provided a broad guideline to participants' answers. It might be due to the characteristic of the semi-structured interviews which usually already has a well-ordered thematic 'piles' (ibid). Even the order and the structure of question were differently used depend on how participants formulated answers, it was able to capture common topics. Secondly, in a reverse way, those topics were also observed from the participants' answers. Though the interview questions did not intend purposeful guide to particular answers, similar and repeated patterns were found from their answers. Therefore, by combining this two-way round familiarization process, initial topics within the data were captured in the early process of analysis.

After capturing the initial topics, the next stage was indexing and sorting out those common topics and deciding how to categorize them. Although they were mentioned even from the first step, themes and concepts until this process were not fully processed in a systematic way yet. Here, initial topics were roughly classified what can be put in the higher order as a 'theme' and which 'concepts' can be belong to much broader themes (ibid:278). In the later process of analyzing, they will be presented in a more clear way to show how the interview data was analyzed. Here, according to the main topics appearing in the texts, 'set of headings' were given to each of clusters (ibid:282). [Table 3] shows how the result of initial 'topic coding' of data is classified as initial themes (Saldana (2009), cited in ibid).

[Table 3] Initial themes

Flextime policy	(Night) Overtime (Control on working hours)
Smoker / Non-smoker Smoking community	Arrangement of seats
Ad hoc work tasks	Public institutions / Private firms
Autonomy on work and time distribution	Using vacation
Size of organization	Atmosphere of workplace
Tendency of superior	Private break

After sorting out the initial topic coding, the raw data was visited again for numerous times to see if the first labelling was appropriate in terms of coherence and shared contents (ibid:283). Firstly, the initial themes were visited one by one how each one of the interview participants is presenting those particular themes. The way how they talked about the specific themes, the wordings they used, their real-life examples related to the themes and the impression of the researcher about one particular part of conversation were considered in this process. In the meanwhile, the linkage between one theme and others was also considered. Since the interview data itself was not clearly divided but all the contents was in the fluid of conversation, it was able to see all the themes are interrelated and affect each other. After that, different interview data were reviewed under the same theme, comparing and contrasting which words or concepts are commonly found. If there are commonly found themes or different appearance of certain concepts, in what way they are similar and what might cause the difference were thoroughly considered (ibid:282-283).

The final step of data analysis was grounded on the theoretical framework of this study. As the main purpose of this study is to understand actual experience of Korean employees, the main focus of data analysis was focused on probing participants' experience based on descriptive conversation with their own language and categorizing them with the researcher's interpretive capability. Each repeated themes was categorized and linked based on the theoretical framework, which focuses on how the bigger context surrounds employees affect the perception of them within workplace. Also, to sufficiently answer the research question, the interpretation process was done while keep revisiting the theoretical assumptions and its implication on the interview data. How each theme is linked or affect each other will be more closely presented in the '6.3. Discussion'.

6.2 Findings

      As a result of the thematic analysis, how themes were finally formulated and the contribution of participants to them with their own experience will be illustrated in this part. Under the title of each theme, detailed description of findings will be presented. For more in-depth description about how they actually think and perceive, some part of interviews of participants' answers were frequently quoted.

Flextime policy

      For the questions asking about their commute time and general atmosphere of workplace, participants naturally came up with introducing 'flextime policy' in their organization. Flextime policy is generally defined as 'a worker's ability to alter the starting and quitting time of a work' (Gariety & Shaffer, 2001:69). There is common structure of the system in each workplace, which is adjusting their commuting time, and few minor variations existed under that common structure. The basic structure of flextime policy is changing their working-hour from '9 to 6' to '8 to 5' or '10 to 7', mainly to avoid the traffic congestion. Some workplaces are applying more detailed variations to this basic structure such as adjusting commute time on a half hourly basis, on daily basis and quarterly basis. There were 2 specific workplaces which are applying a sort of averaging their working hours per week or month basis (in case of participant E and G).

      Including one participant (E), who gave neutral feedback on flextime policy, every participants of interview were aware of the policy and general usage within their workplace. Among 8 participants, only one participant (B) shared a positive experience about their flextime policy which was in force at the moment. She thought the reason why her workplace can guarantee active flextime policy is because her workplace is quasi-public, and its umbrella organization which is also a public institution encourages employees' autonomous use of flextime policy. Other 6 participants answered that although they have an active flextime policy, it is not used very actively by employees. Their answers could be divided into the 2 types, one is because of the job characteristic and the other is due to the atmosphere of workplace. For the former, participants mentioned collaborative work characteristic which includes frequent meetings and staff training. Also, if their work is team-based and even requires collaboration with different branches or external clients, it is difficult to adjust their working hours only for their preferences. If this is not their case, some answered that they are reluctant to use the policy because they mind others' opinion. One of them mentioned that,

    "Even though there is no forceful pressure to prevent using flextime policy, employees are usually reluctant to use it. I think it is because most of them already experienced the conformity of the workplace and might think that it is much convenient to do just like how others do (Participant A)."

Likewise, Participant H shared her experience,

"I once used that policy to come earlier. But since my superior came later than general working hours, I need to wait for her (or him) because I had to meet her (or his) schedule of work. Therefore, there was no use of using flextime policy."

Employees did not actively use it but they just adjust their commute time only within 10 to 20 minutes boundary, even though they are supposed to make a much wider range of time change. According to participant H once again, even they can postpone their starting time of work until 11 in the morning, no one can dare to actually use it but mind their superiors. Therefore, the maximum postponement of starting time of work is actually set at 10:30 in the morning as a result.

Smoking

According to precedent studies or survey (Kim et al., 2018; Park & Kang, 2018), smoking was one of the common ways of spending their private break according to Korean employees. In the same line with this existing knowledge, most of the participants came up with smoking when the researcher provided explained about the concept of private break in detail. Among 8 interview participants, only one of them (participant G) was a smoker. Non-smokers, however, were also aware of the aspect of smoking in their workplaces as much as smokers.

One of the concepts repeatedly mentioned among participants was a 'smoking community', which refers to smoking time where information circulates and primary decisions on work are made. Participant A mentioned,

"... It is where all the information (within the organization) gathers. Sometimes Non-smokers are even marginalized in that flow of information. Since smokers gather several times a day and spend quite lots of time together, the quality and variety of information are incomparable with others."

Participant E also shared same perception as A did. Participant B even shared her experience when she joined smoking break as a non-smoker. She mentioned that she could get surprisingly much information when she was there, so it was an opportunity for her to actually see how much influence the smoking community has within her workplace.

For participant G, the only smoker among interview participants, smoking was a means of private break and he thought he is having enough private break at work. When he was asked why does he think so, he answered it is because Korean society guarantees the smoking break at work. Participants A, E and H also mentioned the same aspect. According to them, smoking is 'acceptable excuse' which no one brings it into a question. E mentioned that,

31

"... It has been accepted as a reasonable culture from the past. So I think it is settled down in our society and no one brings it into a question. ... Even I myself never questioned why it is naturally acceptable without any doubt."

Some participants also mentioned the different standard of judgement depends on smoking preference. For the question 'what would you think if a non-smoker is absent from their office as often as smoker?', participant A and G answered that they would feel uncomfortable about their work attitude. Participant E even mentioned that she once talked with her non-smoking colleagues as a joke, 'should we also smoke to be as much free as smokers in terms of using private break?'.

For the reason why smoking break is still prevalent as undoubtedly acceptable part of working culture, there was a common reasoning from some participants. Participant E pointed out the fact that most of the smokers in her workplace are male employees, and the majority of them are in the managerial position. Therefore, it is often the case superiors suggest smoking break to their subordinates and subordinates have no choice but to follow their superior's suggestion. She thought in this way, smoking break has settled down as a workplace culture and hard to put it into a question since it is usually initiated from superiors. Likewise, participant C explained the reason why his organization has less strong smoking community is because there are mostly female employees in his organization, who are relatively prone to being non-smoker in his opinion.

More detailed aspect how employees using smoking break could be found from the answer of participant G. He said he usually go for smoking by himself, but when there was a meeting, smokers naturally go for smoking altogether after the meeting. Also, as he is in the managerial position, he mentioned that he usually suggests for smoking break to his subordinates or colleagues. Personally he sometimes use this time as an opportunity of casual report to his boss, such as updating the progress of present project.

Ad hoc task

In the literature review, Korean working culture often described with simultaneity of work tasks and flexible changes of time schedule to deal with ad hoc changes (Bader et al., 2018:9, 14; Kim et al., 2018:46). Most of interview participants of this study are also familiar with this description. In relation to questions 'how Korean employees are controlling their work and time', all of participants were able to present their own experience at workplace about ad hoc tasks. The main tendency of respondents under this topic was observer when they were asked 'how does unexpected ad hoc task happen?'. One of the main causes of ad hoc task was related to their superiors or umbrella organization. Participant C mentioned that,

"My boss's schedule is very flexible. We sometimes get to know on the very day of his business trip. So it is hard to predict when we can schedule a business meeting with him. Also, since we are under the influence of our umbrella organization, ... there are occasions when the priority of task

suddenly changes and the project which is almost finished being delayed depends on their decisions."

Similarly, Participant H shared her experience in terms of ad hoc manner of tasks;

"... We usually work through this process; when the decisions were made by working-level talks, we report the decisions and continue with them only when our superiors are satisfied with it. However, whenever we report our opinions or progress, they very often suddenly change their minds. Then we need to start all over again. ... As we are collaborating with other departments at the same time, it is very hard to expect the fixed schedule and which variables we need to deal with. It is lots of stress (laughing)."

Apart from that, participants experienced change in task priority because of the ad hoc task request. In a specific case, participant G answered that he have experienced sudden call for a business meeting when he was about to finish his work (usually around 6pm). Participant F mentioned that it should be at least 5 pm to get to know whether she needs to do overtime or not. Until then, as she cannot expect which work will be unexpectedly assigned to her, it is hard to know whether she can get off work on time or not.

Then what are the consequences of ad hoc task? The most commonly mentioned example was overtime. As participant E said, they usually need to handle ad hoc tasks first since they are often has an urgent needs. As a result, she needs to put her daily duties off after those ad hoc tasks, which should be done by the same day as well. In those cases, she often needed to do overtime to finish her daily duties. Participant H shared her experience when the whole schedule had to be changed because of the sudden change from her superior or other departments. Among 8 participants, only 2 of them thought they have certain degree of autonomy in dealing with such an ad hoc task. Participant A said,

"I do not have that many occasions of ad hoc task. Even if I have to deal with them sometimes, there is no such a big burden because I can schedule it under my control."

Participant B also shared similar experience;

"... In the case of ad hoc request, I always negotiate. For example, I said I could not do it right away since I had my own task at the moment, or I asked for the deadline with a specific date, ... or I explained this task takes this amount of time so I needed that amount time to finish it, ect."

In her case, participant B added that it was possible because her organization was willing to accept those sorts of negotiations and respect the decisions of hands-on workers.

Autonomy on work and time distribution

To the question 'how much autonomy do you experience in terms of work and time distribution?', 4 participants answered with positive attitude and 2 participants answered with negative attitude. The other 2 did not specifically mentioned how they are experiencing the autonomy on work and time distribution. Among those with negative attitudes, participants C explained why he thinks in that way with 3 different reasons;

"Actually I hope I can have any type of autonomy at my work (laughing). Because it has only been few months since I started this job, ... I think I am not skillful enough to be good at work. The structure of my daily work is basically being imposed task from my superiors and reporting it to them after I finished it. Therefore, I feel like there is no room for autonomy in terms of distributing my duties and time. ... Also, since my workplace does not really guarantee the private working space, it does not feel like I can work autonomously. ... It is also related to the relationship at work; my direct superior has very close relationship with the staffs of our umbrella organization, and that bothers me a lot because they chat even late in the night (in a group chat where he is also included). I think there should be a boundary (between work and life), but..."

The other one, participant H, mentioned the characteristic of her task as a main reason;

"We usually work as a team for a big project to release one product. Many different tasks related to the project are divided to each department, and the schedule is also quite dependent on the progress of the project. Therefore, there is rarely the case I can work (and decide) by myself."

Among those who are experiencing relatively higher autonomy and showed positive attitude, participant B said she has 100 percent of autonomy in terms of work and time distribution. When she was asked why she thinks so, she mentioned about special situation of her organization;

"Right now, we have many vacancies in executive and managerial positions. ... this situation encourages us to work more autonomously and the organization itself also supports it. ... Superiors admit that it is the hands-on workers who know the task the best."

Other 2 participants, D and F, explained their relatively higher autonomous based on the characteristic of their task. Since their work is mainly done on the individual level and does not require frequent collaborations, they could decide the main timetable and how to distribute time on each task. Participant E also mentioned that it is herself who mainly distribute task within broad schedule and initiate break times.

Tendency of superior & Atmosphere of workplace

Among participants' answers, the theme of 'atmosphere of workplace' often comes with the theme of 'the tendency of superior'. All of participant mentioned that the tendency of their superior is one of the biggest factors which had the direct impact on the atmosphere of their workplace. Through their experiences, many of the participants still perceive their workplace as hierarchical organization. For example, participant F shared her experience when she was surprised by what her superior requested to her;

> "Most of the executives here are in their sixties or seventies. ... I think their set of mind is not very appropriate in these days. Companies in 70s might be like here. ... the most shocking examples is when I was pointed out my outfit. One of the executives members told me 'why do you wear casual shirt and jeans in the company?' and he suggested 'why don't we make an uniform?'. ... Now no one wears jeans at work after I told everyone what happened to me."

Another example can be found in the answer of participant G. When the new flextime policy was released in his workplace, he said it was all of sudden to most of the employees. The chairperson of his company just declared the start of the new policy without an internal discussion or a preparatory period. Likewise, participant C mentioned that ingratiating with superiors within his workplace reproduces the hierarchical organization culture. He added he often feel uncomfortable when he sees others ingratiating themselves with superiors.

This tendency naturally related to their working styles when the participants looked behind their experiences. Participant H mentioned,

> "I think it is a pyramid structure, because when the work schedule is fixed from the upper level (by superiors) we (subordinates) cannot change it. Rather, we need to follow their decisions."

Participant C also mentioned how he was affected by the tendency of his superior in terms of working style;

> "...My superior prioritizes the result - being productive at work is the most important value for him. It is hard to disregard his preference when I work. Even though I try not to be affected too much, I am always being conscious of my superiors' tendency."

It also turned out that the tendency of using breaks and dining together after work is highly affected by the tendency of superior. Participant E mentioned that if the superior prefers nightlife, that workplace gets to frequent dinner or other activities after work. On the contrary to this, if the superior does not like such gatherings, the frequency of such events decreases accordingly. Participant D experienced the change in terms of dinner after work according to the change of her superior. Her previous superior really enjoyed dinner after work so her workplace tended to have it quite often, but present superior rarely suggest it.

Using private break has quite similar aspect with dinner after work. Participant H shared her experience;

> "I feel like, … if someone often being absent from her/his seat, it looks bad (negative). Since we mind others' opinions a lot, especially our superiors, if our superiors do not like it we cannot use (private) break as much as we want."

(Night) Overtime

Participants of this study are working 45 hours per week on average. When they were asked about how much they work overtime, most of them firstly presented the change after the recent amendment of Korean LSA. Half of the participants answered their workplace started to deal with overtime and holiday work more seriously, drawing heavier constraints on them. Participant A mentioned that now it is hard to imagine working on holidays compare to what he felt before the LSA amendment. He added to here;

> "There are spot checks from the head quarter or trade union about how the new legislation about overtime is being followed. Therefore, my superiors such as executive members are now more strictly supervising the use of overtime of each employee."

In more detail, 2 participants explained the procedure to work overtime in their workplaces. Participant A and B provided similar answers;

> "Before (the LSA amendment), we can work overtime whenever we want. However, now we need an approval at least 30 minutes before the closing hour to work overtime. Also, we need to finish our work at the exact time that we reported before. Otherwise we cannot access to the inter-office system (after the planned schedule)." (Participant A)

> "We need an 'overtime directive' (from our superiors) to work after the statutory working hours. As we tag our identification card when we start and finish work, the history of working time is automatically registered in the inter-office system. On the next day, I need to submit detailed statement about my overtime (to superior), then my superior can check on daily basis whether the planned schedule was followed or not. When my working-hours per week have already been reached 52 hours, I no longer can get an overtime directive in that week." (Participant B)

On the contrary, there was a different view about this change. Participant H said it is true there were changes after the LSA amendment, for example being sensitive about overtime and following the statutory working hours. However, she thought there was no such an ultimate change. She mentioned,

> "I think the Korean working culture has been formulated over a long period of time. Even though I could feel minor changes, I do not think those changes can cover the whole range of working culture in Korea."

Arrangement of seats

As a part of observing their working environment, participants were asked how their seats are arranged. 6 participants provided valid answer to this question, and all of them described their seats are arranged based on their main task. Participant D explained that their office is firstly divided into different floors based on the broader division, and then their seats within the office are arranged once again based on their task. In her case, employees are sitting next to their superiors or peers who were assigned similar task. Participant H also shared same experience, where the seats are arranged according to the current project they are working on. As a positive aspect of this type of seat arrangement, participant G mentioned there is no need to move over when they need a discussion on work. As his team members are sitting right next to each other, he said it is very convenient to discuss each other by just turning their seats.

Within those examples of seat arrangement according to task, there were overlapping answers about how 'inner seat' and 'outer seat' are decided. According to their answers, the inner seat means the seats located inside of the office where the space and privacy are relatively well secured. On the contrary, the outer seat means the seats located near the aisle or the entrance where people constantly pass by and therefore often being disturbed. What participants agreed on was that people in higher positions are often assigned the inner seats, while the newly recruited or who are in the lower positions are more likely assigned the outer seats. Participant C mentioned that;

"... My seat is not a good one. It is the one where people can see the (computer) monitor when they open the door of the office. ... Recently there was newly recruited employee who is in the higher position than me, and he was assigned the 'inner seat'."

Related to this, participant H shared a 'tacit rule' of her office;

"Usually the inner seats are assigned to people in the higher positions. No one talks about this rule in public, but it is kind of tacit rule in the office."

All of the participants answered they often think their privacy is not secured at workplace since they are sharing the same office with co-workers. Like what participant C described in the earlier paragraph, participant F shared her experience when she set a screen saver to protect her privacy at work. Since her seat is open to others, she said it was quite hard to pay attention on her work when others are staying behind her seat and sometimes peeped at what she was doing. In the same line with her experience, participant G mentioned setting partitions in between every seat would give more comfort and autonomy for employees.

Public/Private division

Among 8 participants, there was an equal division of participants; half of them are working in private sector and another half is working in public sector. Even it was not intend, this division provided rich description about how public and private workplaces are differently depicted by their employees. First of all,

there were 2 participants who are respectively working for public agency and research institution, and both of them are funded by local government (participant B and C). When they were asked to depict the atmosphere and work environment of their workplaces, both of them mentioned about the influence of their umbrella organization (in their cases, the local governments). Participant C said the atmosphere of their workplace is affected a lot by the local government they are working with, especially in terms of the hierarchical characteristic within the organization (according to his opinion). The way how the local government works and what they are dealing with at the moment also has quite strong impact on his institution.

It was connected to more detailed description about the relationship between local government and its lower bodies. Participant C explained how he feels about this relationship at work;

> "Depends on what is happening in the local government, the concentration of work in our institution varies a lot. Since they are taking initiative on planning and delegating the tasks, their initiatives highly affect my task as well. In common parlance, we need to get their favor."

Participant B also mentioned the close relationship between her workplace and the superior local government. As they are cooperating for various projects and being funded by the local government, she sometimes felt sort of pressure to be nice to them.

How people perceive the difference between public and private sector was also observed. Participant E, who is working at quasi-public organization, described that public institutions are generally under the more direct influence of central government. She added this is why the institutional frameworks, such as flextime policy, are well developed in public sector better than private sector. In the same context, participant B shared her thoughts why her organization, Local government funded agency, can restrict statutory working hours much more effectively than other workplaces;

> "(Generally people) do not think it is desirable to do overtime as an employee of public organization. After the amendment of Korean LSA, the restriction to follow statutory working hours has become much stricter. ... I actually think it is possible because I am working in the public organization. It might not be possible in private companies."

Add to that, she shared her own view how employees in public sector are relatively well protected by legal rights. She mentioned that;

> "... Even the superior organization cannot limit our own usage of legal rights. Since we think we are protected by legal frame, if we complain based on our rights no one can stop us following the legislations. That's how I feel like."

On the contrary, in private sector, there was a case where internal guideline of organization exceeds the national legal guidelines. Participant F, who

is working at incorporated association, shared her experience about night shift allowance;

"Formerly, we had a paid overtime or night shift. We indeed frequently worked overtime, and it was doable because at least we were paid for that. However, for the economic reasons, the executive members decided not to pay the night shift allowance anymore, and I did not get any proper explanation about it. ... Afterwards, I almost have not done overtime. But no one guarantees what will happen if I need to do overtime inevitably."

Using vacation

To the question how they are autonomously distributing work-related schedule, 3 out of 8 participants brought up the topic about using vacation. All of them answered they can freely use the vacation, but at the same time they did not realize that preconditions to use vacation were always included in their answers. One of the preconditions is choosing different period from their peers who are in charge of similar task in the same department. For example, participant A and E mentioned that they mediate the dates for vacation with their peers who work in the same sub-organization. In the meanwhile, they implied that another precondition to use vacation is 'putting a work first'. Participant A explained because it might disrupt work if everyone uses their vacation on the same period, they need to mediate their own schedule with co-workers. For the more detailed question, 'If you can freely use vacations, do you even use long-term vacation more than a week?', participant H answered that it is not a problem of possibility whether employees can use long-term vacation or not. She said,

"We (Korean employees in general) anyway do not have many days of annual paid vacation. That is why people are often reluctant to use long-term vacation. ... It is just 15 or 16 days a year, not 30 days like some other countries. Then who would use them at once?"

Private break

Finally, for the questions to see how Korean employees are using private break at workplace, several sub-categories were captured among participants' answers. First of all, the average number of uses of private break per day was 4.625 times. The number of uses of private break varied among participants, from 3 times a day to 10 times a day. All of the interview participants answered they usually spend only few minutes on their private break, maximum 10 minutes. Some of them were surprised when they counted the time required for their private break, because it became quite lots of time when they added them all together. Participant G, who is the only smoker, was surprised realizing that he is spending almost 1 hour for private break by using 6 times of 10-minutes smoking break.

How they are using their private break also varied a lot. The most commonly mentioned answers were using the toilet, refilling water bottle, having a cup of coffee or tea and having a chat with co-workers. Participant H specifically mentioned about going to convenient store or visiting in-house clinic.

Participant C, who answered she is not using any private break, mentioned that sometimes she takes a walk or has a phone call to refresh herself. Add to that, sort of 'chat-sessions' occurs several times a day in her office. At the later part of the interview she confessed that it is still very confusing how to define the private break even she thought she understood what private break means in the beginning. What she mentioned above only takes few minutes so it does not feel like having a break for her. Participant D shared similar experience. She said,

"I often work outside of office to handle post-service of my workplace. ... It usually takes about 15 minutes, so I can take a break during that time. If there are many mails to handle, then I can even use that time to take care of my personal affairs. My superior encourages using that time to take a break such as having a cup of coffee or taking a walk. So I cannot strictly divide the private break and work."

Since all the participants mentioned they mostly do not plan to have a break but just decide to use it when they need, they generally use it alone. Though there are cases when they run into their co-workers and decide to chat or have a cup of coffee together. In case of spending private break with their co-workers, for instance when they are having a coffee break together, there were 2 different topics of conversation. Most of them shared their experiences when they talked about personal issues such as how their vacation was and where is a good restaurant to visit. Participant D said as she and her co-workers have in-depth discussions on work during working hours, they do not bring work-related topics up while they are having a break time. In contrast, participant G said he sometimes uses his private break, more specifically smoking time, as a time when he can casually report to his superior. He said,

"There are occasions when we naturally bring work-related issues up while we are smoking. If my boss joins, then I can also use the time to report how current project has made progress in more comfortable atmosphere. ... I think I naturally utilize my break time to work."

Half of the participants thought they can have enough private break, and another half thought they do not have enough opportunity for private break. Participant G said he is using most of his private break as smoking time, and since Korean society in general (in his opinion) guarantees the time for smoking, he thought he is enjoying enough time for private break. Other 3 participants (A, B and D) answered since there are no such big constraints for using private break, they thought they are having fairly enough private breaks. On the contrary, participant C and H shared their thoughts why do they think their private break is not enough. Participant H said she cannot freely decide when to use it because being absent from her seat does not considered as a good work attitude. In the case of participant C, he did not perceive private break as a time when he can relax from work. He mentioned,

"I do not think private break is really a time when I can relax without thinking about work. It is just a means of raising work productivity. ... For me it (private break) is felt as an extension of work, not a real break."

Participant E and F pointed out vague guideline how to use private break at work is the reason why they do not feel free to use it and do not have a enough time for it accordingly. Participant F said,

"I have a no idea what is allowable range of using private break. I do not know how others are using their private break. ... I assume we can use our own break if we do not disturb a work, but ... since there is not clear guideline, I do not feel like enough amount of private break is guaranteed for me."

Related to this, some participants shared their experience when they were disturbed by others while using private break. Participant C and F shared similar experience;

"Lately, I left in the office alone when all of my team members went out for a coffee break. Then suddenly my superior calls for a meeting via in-company messenger. I agonized a lot whether I need to tell them about this or not, since I thought it might disturb their private break."

"Even when I am having short break from heavy workload, if my superior request another task I need to directly respond to work. (Interviewer: "Then you cannot have a proper break when you need it?") Yes, so I try not to miss an opportunity whenever I can have a break."

6.3   Discussion

As presented in the previous section, individual real-life experiences collected from in-depth interviews were presented as categorized themes. As the main purpose of this study is to understand and describe how Korean employees are experiencing and perceiving private break at work and how the context affects them, finding causal relationship in the data analysis process is not a goal in this section. Rather, by categorizing extracted themes and re-visiting them several times, the common and general relations among them will be drawn.

[Figure 3] is visualizing the thematic relations. How the themes were interpreted based on the theoretical framework and what was the meaningful finding considering the main research question will be presented in the following paragraphs. In the last part, how the theme of 'private break', the main focus of this study, is interrelated with other themes will be explained. In addition to that, implication of theoretical framework on the division of themes will be discussed.

[Figure 3] Thematic relations
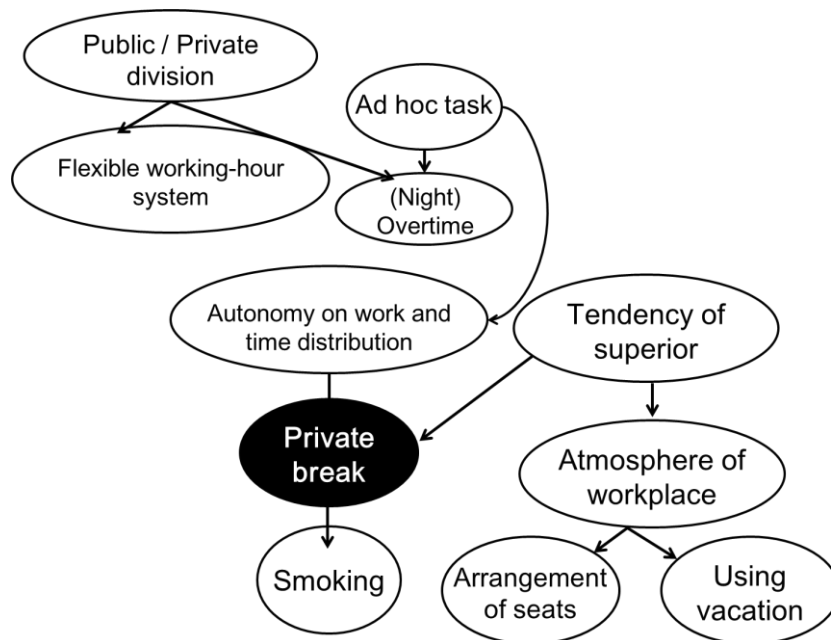
6.3.1 The linkage among themes

As it is seen in the [Figure3], general description of linkage among themes will be firstly presented. The division of interview participants according to where they are working provided interesting starting point of thematic relations. Among 8 interview participants, 4 work at public sector and another 4 work at private sector. Depends on where they work, 'public/private division' was related to the two other themes, 'flextime policy' and '(night) overtime'.

First of all, the answers of interviewees regarding flextime policy often connected to their personal thoughts how their workplaces are managing the policy. Among 7 participants who clearly mentioned how the policy works in their workplaces, 2 of them explained being a public institution enables more active and well-structured enforcement of flextime policy. Even the participant, who did not specifically mentioned about how her workplace is managing the policy (participant D), also mentioned how can it be different as being a public institution, for example by concerning the reaction of citizens and the desirable work attitudes as a civil servant. On the other hand, answers from employees of private sector were more about why the flextime policy cannot be performed as it should be. One of them even answered there is no such an equivalent system in her workplace (participant F), and the other mentioned that employees cannot use the system as they are supposed to even the system exists (participant H). To sum up, the different characteristics of public and private division of workplaces are

related to the usage of flextime policy, in terms of whether it can be widely and actively used or not by their employees.

In the light of the theoretical framework of this study, there are several reflections which can be found here. When considering the ultimate purpose of flextime policy, which initially aims to provide more autonomous structuring of working hours to employees (Kim, 2016:2, 4), it was able to see the system is not evenly settled down in every workplaces and its usage varies a lot depends on the type of workplace. Based on the time discourse analysis by Kim (2011), planning working hours by using supporting policies is still not considered as the own right of employees. Rather, there are contextual factors which constraints employees' choices on how to use the existing policy, proving that the right to control working hours is under the employers' decision.

Also, as the Social information processing theory described, 'the consequences of past choices' and the 'conformity' were highly affecting employees' choices. For instance, participant A explained that employees become reluctant to use the flextime policy because they 'experienced' what happened when they used different their working hours from their co-workers. He added that 'a collective action' is an important value within workplace and people who once tried to use the policy might felt it is more 'appropriate' and better to fit in the standardized schedule. Participant H also mentioned that even the maximum limit of starting hour of work is 11 in the morning, no one actually use the policy until its limit. The 'actual' limit being used by her peers is 10:30, but she said everyone knows it will not be considered as 'desirable' decision coming to work around that time, because they 'experienced' when they chose to do it. Therefore, once again it was able to see how the context, especially the experience based on their past choices and the conformity of their workplace, situationally constraints the choices of individual employees (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:224, 226).

Second, the public/private division is also related to how participants experience the overtime. More specifically, the division of workplace is related to how the overtime is controlled at workplace, and the 'ad hoc task', which is another theme, was often mentioned as a reason why employees end up with overtime. There was a difference how often do they experience ad hoc tasks depending on individual cases, but all of them were well acknowledging how ad hoc tasks generally appear in Korean work environment. According to their answers, unplanned task request apart from daily task was one of the main reasons why they need to stay late in the office even after usual working hours. Based on where they work, in terms of public and private division, there was a difference how overwork is systematically controlled by internal policy. 4 out of 8 participants who answered the questions about overtime mentioned that their internal regulation on working hours has been strengthened after the new amendment of LSA was implemented. Even the public/private division did not seem to have significant difference on this fact in the first place, when the actual practice above the literal regulation was considered, it was able to see the difference. The participants in public sector were experiencing more active enforcement of new regulation, such as actually working less hours than before, than those in private sector.

The theme of 'ad hoc task' makes another linkage to the 'autonomy on work and time distribution' within working hour. To the question 'how much autonomy do you have on distributing the work and time', having frequent ad hoc tasks was one of the main causes which hinder autonomous control of work and time by employees. Even though they structure their daily tasks and how to distribute the time required, an initial plan can be pushed back on the priority list when their superior or peers ask for unplanned tasks. It increases not only the total amount of the work, but also deprives the control of employees on how do they want to plan timetable of their work. Some participants answered that there is rarely the case they need to do overtime or change the priority of work due to ad hoc tasks. When their answers were analysed in depth, however, it was able to infer that they perceive ad hoc task as already prevailing and natural, therefore they cannot think it is actually infringe upon their right. In this respect, if the context is habitually reproduced and shared within workplaces, it is thought to be very hard for employees to recognize which factors are formulating their perceptions and decisions as a result (Shin, 2009:196-198; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:226).

The theme of 'private break' can be thought to be another aspect of autonomous time usage within workplace. Especially, this theme was able to understand in depth with how the social information processing theory considers the workplace. In this theoretical background, jobs are considered as complex stimuli with multidimensional components which make employees often confused about how to react or behave within organization (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:229). According to this perspective, employees are able to get clues by observing how others do and internalize what are the shared values and norms of their organization (ibid). While conducting interviews, it was able to infer that unclear definition of private break in Korean workplaces makes employees being confused about what is private break and when and how they can use it. To help their understanding what is being studied, clear definition of how private break is defined in this study was provided to interview participants. Even most of the participants were able to understand what does private break mean, some of them shared their difficulties of how and when to use it in their workplaces. For instance, participant F told it is hard to know how others spend their private break, which makes her confused about what is 'acceptable' attitude of having private break.

On the contrary, the theme of 'smoking' has been rationalized for long time and perceived as 'acceptable' form of private break in most of the participants' experience (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:231). 5 out of 8 participants mentioned that there is sort of 'smoking community' in their workplaces where most of the information related to their workplace are shared and sometimes major decisions are primarily decided. Among those 5 participants who mentioned about smoking community, 4 of them also mentioned smoking is considered as acceptable excuse for frequently being away from their office. Participant E shared her own thoughts about smoking in workplaces; even though some of the non-smokers are recognizing smokers empty the office more often than non-smokers, no one attempted to raise a problem on their behavior but

agreed on how it is generally justified (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:229). She also added that there are many smokers in managerial position, and they often bring their subordinates to smoke. Therefore, it has been hard to stop the reproduction of smoking culture in workplace and she thought it has been fixed as 'masculine culture'. From other participants' answers as well, it was able to see that smoking is considered as legitimized behavior and guaranteed within Korean working culture, while the agreement based on people's expectation (which considers smoking is acceptable) is supporting that rationalization. The rationalizing process of smoking remains strong in terms of justifying the behavior of smokers. For instance, 3 participants explained that when the smoker and non-smoker leave their seats in the same ratio, the behavior of non-smokers would be considered worse than smokers, being blamed of their lack of concentration on work.

'The tendency of superior' was the theme which can affect smoking as well as other types of private break. 3 out of 8 participants mentioned that their usage of private break can be different according to the preference of their superiors. For example, participant B shared that the tendency of using private break in their workplace has been changed after their team manager was changed. Before, there were more occasions when they go out for drinking coffee together with their superior, which is different from current atmosphere where people do not often go out for having a break. It is similarly applied to 'the atmosphere of workplace', such as how to manage their tasks, how often do they have dinner or drink after work and what is considered as desirable behavior within workplaces. For example, participant H shared her experience that how she need to behave within the office was completely changed after she moved to a new team with new superior. Before, it was possible to freely discuss with her peers close by while sitting on her seat. Now her current superior prefers quiet atmosphere in the office, so instead of talking personally she need to use a internal messenger even when she wants to talk with her peer who is right next to her.

The atmosphere of workplace is related to another aspect, the theme of 'seat arrangement'. Among 6 participants who explained about their seat arrangement in the office, 5 of them described their seats are arranged according to their task. They added that it reflects the atmosphere of their workplace which is highly work-centric. When they were asked follow-up questions about the same topic, a common pattern was observed in their answers. In their description, the most highly-positioned superior often takes the innermost seats and there was a hierarchy of the seat depends on their position. For example, participants C, F, and H mentioned employees in the lowest position tends to take the outermost seats which are comparatively open to public and near to the passage where people pass by. To the question if there is any clear rule for this kind of seat arrangement, they said it is tacit rule which no one has tried to raise a question. Providing seats which guarantee the most personal space and privacy to people in higher positions seems to be justified by members of organization, and the norms based on the hierarchy within organization were supporting it (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:229, 231). Here, it was able to see that Korean employees are taking for granted not only the control on time but also other factors within their workplace as already 'rationalized' or 'legitimized', so they cannot problematize sort of

irrational norms and values (ibid). If the social context surrounding them is supporting those rationalized tacit norms and rules, it might be hard for employees to imagine other options which current conditions are not taken for granted.

'Using vacations' also appears to be related to the atmosphere of workplace, especially when employees decide their reaction or behavior based on how others did before (ibid:229). 3 out of 8 participants specified how do they use their vacations, and all of them thought their workplace is guaranteeing relatively free usage of vacations. Though, from what participant A shared in his experience, it was able to see there is always precondition of considering the schedule of his peers who work at the same department in advance. He explained that it is because people know disrupting work schedule by using vacations recklessly is not desirable in their organization from their indirect experiences. Therefore, it seemed like employees are already internalized the shared norms and expectations of their organization while they did not fully agree on them or even did not ever think about why it should be in a certain way (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978:229; Jeon et al., 2016:96). At the same time, the tendency of putting priority on work over vacation once again verified how the time discourse which makes a work the most important thing is deep-rooted within Korean society (Kim, 2013:91-92, 94-95). Even interview participants think their workplaces encourage the use of vacation and they actually can do it in certain degree, they did not recognize themselves prioritizing work and work ethics as a good worker over their rights on time as a employee (Kim, 2013:87).

6.3.2 Private break and the social context

By analyzing and interpreting the findings from interview data, the research question could be answered based on the theoretical framework. Various factors in the social context, which surrounds the individual employee and constraints their behaviors, were captured in the interviews and categorized as themes. The components of social context - flextime policy, smoking, ad hoc task, autonomy on work and time distribution, tendency of superior, atmosphere of workplace, (night) overtime, arrangement of seats, public/private division and using vacation - were not only impacting on how individual employee use their private break but also being related to each other. Within their relations, it was able to find general and collective common experiences of Korean workplace which surpasses an individual distinctiveness.

When participants presented each theme respectively, there were repetitive connections even when they did not notice them. The main focus of this study, private break of individual employees, was being affected by how their social context is formulating their work environment. Especially, smoking, autonomy on work and time distribution and tendency of superior were directly related to private break. Even it appears as an individual choice as a result, it was able to see the components of their social contexts were intervening in the process of their decisions.

7 Conclusion

Long working-hour in Korea is a complex and multifaceted problem. As the history, culture, politics, economy and more than these have formulated how it is at the present, it is hard to grasp every aspect of it to find the best solution. Given that the nature of study subject, it was important to see how existing studies approached to the problem and what has been missing in their argument. To make meaningful engagement with ongoing scholarly conversation, relevant literatures were thoroughly reviewed. There were many perspectives which emphasize the different aspect of long working-hour in Korea, and this study focused on their weakness which marginalized how employees actually experience and perceive the problem. How many hours do they work often considered as the result of individual choice, but they did not really see how broader social structure impacts on individuals and constraints their decisions. In this respect, this study brought a specific example of 'private break', as one of the small units of working hours; as it only shares a small portion of working hours, it opens up further suggestions for future studies with other examples which can illustrate the experience of employees.

Of course, focusing on the specific example of private break was a challenge for the researcher at the same time. As it is not defined literal terminology in the society, it needed sophisticated concept operationalization to draw a clear focus of this study. Also, this subjectively defined concept of private break was sometimes partially understood by interview participant. Even though the thoughts how it could be more clearly addressed in the study remains as a limitation of this study, it also becomes an originality of this study which is distinctive from other studies. Taking account of private break which left in the blind spot of legislation enabled to see it importance in terms of employees' right on time. Furthermore, studying the interrelation of private break and social context enabled relevant research field to see how even small units of working hours is highly affected by broader context and the importance of including employees to find a better solution.

This study leaves a room for further improvements. If the targeted sample was a totally different group, data gathered and findings can yield totally different result. Even though producing generalizable theory was not a purpose of this study, setting different sample criteria would enabled to see different aspects of the same research subject. For example, if blue-collar workers which often work with more flexible working-hour system were selected as a sample, different methods and strategy would need to observe their experiences. If the implication of this study can be applied in further researches with different aspects, more plentiful studies which embrace the broader context will consequently contribute to better solution for long-working hour in Korea.

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Appendix 1

인터뷰 요청서
Interview request form

본 인터뷰는 스웨덴 룬드대학교 (Lund University)의 Welfare Policies and Management 석사과정 논문 '한국 근로자들의 근로시간 내 사적휴게 사용 경험에 대한 이해 (가제)'의 일환입니다. 근로시간 내 사적휴게 사용과 관련한 근로자들의 경험을 바탕으로 근로자의 시간 인식과 자율성의 정도에 영향을 미치는 다양한 상황들을 연구하고자 함이 주된 목적입니다. 연구 대상은 크게 사무직군 근로자로 한정하고 있으며, 개인이 실제로 경험한 사례에 대해 들려주신다면 보다 의미 있는 연구 결과를 도출하는 데 큰 도움이 될 것입니다. 인터뷰를 통해 수집된 모든 정보는 순수하게 학문적 용도로만 사용될 것이며, 연구에 필요한 기본 정보 이외에 개인의 신상 등은 철저히 익명성이 보장 될 것입니다.

This interview is part of the master's thesis, 'Understanding Korean employees' experience about private break in working hours (working title)', under the programme of Welfare Policies and Management at Lund University, Sweden. The main purpose of study is to understand how contextual factors affect the employees' perception of autonomous time usage, based on their experiences related to private break. The interview participants are largely limited to white collar workers, and it will be great help to draw meaningful research findings if you share your own experiences. All information gathered through the interview will be used only for academic purposes, and personal anonymity will be thoroughly assured except the basic information which is essential for the research.

구체적인 인터뷰 개요는 다음과 같습니다.
- 소요시간: 약 30 분~1 시간 이내
- 인터뷰 형식: 스카이프 (Skype)혹은 카카오톡을 이용한 화상 혹은 전화 인터뷰
- 개인정보 처리: 수집된 모든 자료는 철저히 연구의 목적으로만 활용되며, 모든 참가자들의 이름은 가명으로 처리될 예정입니다.
- 연구 담당자: 윤수진 (룬드 대학교 석사과정생)

Here is an overview about the interview.
- The time required: About 30 minutes to maximum 1 hour
- The format of interview: Video or telephone interview via Skype or Kakao talk
- Personal information processing: All information collected in the interview will be used only for research purposes, and all participants' names will be treated as anonymous.
- Researcher: Soojin Yun (Master's student in Lund University)

※ 연구 제반에 대한 궁금증이나 질문이 있으시면, 연구 담당자 윤수진 (so6112yu-s@student.lu.se)으로 연락주십시오.

※ If you have any question or concern about this study, please contact Soojin Yun (so6112yu-s@student.lu.se), who is in charge of the study.

Appendix 2

Interview guide

Background information

- Can you tell me your age?
- Where do you work? What is your main task at your work?
- How long have you worked in your current workplace? What is your current position?
- How many hours do you work per week on average?

General work environment

- When do you usually come to work?
- Is there any flexible working-hour system at your workplace which you can adjust your commuting hours?
- How many people are working at your workplace? How many people in your department? How many people are sharing the same office with you?
- Who is sitting next to you? Where does your superior sit in the office? How many people can see your computer monitor from their seats?
- Is there any specific rule for seat arrangement?
- How often do you need to cooperate with peers in your team? Can you provide an example how did you cooperate with other team members recently?
- Have you experienced request of ad hoc tasks? If so, how do you deal with those situations?
- How would you describe the organizational atmosphere at work in terms of hierarchy? Do you experience any hierarchy in your workplace?
- Do you feel any pressure of conformity at work? Is there any obligation on participating job-related events, such as drink or dinner after work, collective break within working hours, etc.?

Control on time

- Do you think you have control on using time at work - for example distributing time on different tasks or taking some time for break? Can you independently decide how to use the time at work?
- Do you often experience any interference by others at work? Does it affect your original plan or can you manage it in more suitable way for you?

Using private break

- How many times do you have private break at work per day? How long does it last for each break? Can you describe a routine of your private break? (location, what you do, who do you usually go with, etc.)
- Do you think you have enough private break at work?
- When you have private breaks with others in your team, what topics do you usually talk about?
- Is there any expected way or time duration of private break? Do you decide when and how to use private break by your own need or by considering such 'norms' which considered as appropriate in your workplace?
- When you were suggested or forced to have private break when you do not want to have, have you said 'no' to those offers? What happens when you say 'no' to those offers? Have you ever experienced being marginalized due to not participating private breaks with others?
- Have you experienced any interruption from others (peers or superiors) while having private break? For example, is there any occasion that you need to finish your break because of the interruption or indicative signs that make you mind their opinion?
- Does your workload affect your usage of private break? If so, is it you who control the distribution of time or others who force you directly/indirectly to do it in certain way?

Appendix 3

Interview process

Detailed interview process and schedule follow as below;

- Creating sampling criteria

- Estimating appropriate number of participants
: Considering practicality such as available duration of study, initial number of interview participants was set around 6 to 10 people. It was ended up with 8 participants in the end, when the repeated answers were noticed and no such new information emerged within 2 last interviews (Ritchie et al., 2014:112).

- Contacting people who can introduce appropriate participants (= 'connecting person')

- Contacting the candidates for interview
: The interview request form, with brief introduction of study and interview method, was provided to interview candidates in this stage. Their eligibility was confirmed by not only other criteria but also the understanding and ability to share their experience about private break.

- Set a date and time for the interview
: The interview date and time was set considering the schedule of interview participants in the first place, since all of them are currently working. The time difference between Sweden and Korea was 8 or 7 hours (it was changed when the summer time started on March 31, 2019) was also importantly considered to set interview time.

- Interview

- Transcribing

- Post-contact and reassuring on personal information protection

[Table 1] Interview schedule

	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**	**G**	**H**
Contact with 'connecting person'	3/19	3/26	3/19	-	-	-	-	4/11
Contact with interview candidate	3/24	3/27	3/24	3/20	3/20	3/20	3/19	4/16
The day of interview	4/5	4/3	4/10	3/31	4/7	4/9	3/30	4/18
The day of transcription	4/8	4/8	4/11	4/8	4/9	4/11	4/8	4/18

(Note 1: The interview process presented in [Table 1] was done in 2019.)
(Note 2: 'Connecting person' means the one who used as a connection towards interview candidates.)