

A Study on the Determinants of the Intention of Execution for Management Consulting: Focusing on the Psychological Factors of Middle Managers in Firms

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to clarify what psychological factors influence the perception of management consulting by middle managers working at general firms in Korea. To this end, the psychological factors of middle managers were categorized into personal factors and organizational factors. Personal factors were then classified into innovative activities, job satisfaction, and achievement needs, and organizational factors were classified into job security and organizational loyalty. Then, the impacts of the perception of management consulting, which is a dependent variable, were examined in terms of the intention of execution for management consulting. For reference, this study examined the differences in personal factors, organizational factors, and mean difference in the perception of management consulting according to socio-demographic factors. The factor of middle level managers regarding the intention of execution for management consulting had a positive impact on achievement needs and a negative impact on innovative activities. It was found that there were no impacts on other factors such as job satisfaction, job security, and organizational loyalty. Moreover, management consulting experience regarding the awareness of execution for management consulting turned out to have no moderating effect. In addition, the variables that had a significant mean difference in the perception of management consulting by middle level managers, according to demographic characteristics, were firm size and income.

Keywords: Management Consulting, Management Consulting Experience, Middle Managers in Firms, Organizational Factors, Perception of Execution, Personal Factors

1. Introduction

It is important for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) or owner-managers to engage management consulting for sustained growth and maintenance of their firms and to maximize the consulting effect by enabling middle level managers to execute this function. In this perspective, it is necessary to understand the intention of execution for

consulting in terms of the individual and organizational psychological factors of middle managers, and offer suitable directions and control. Thus, this study aims to verify the impacts of the psychological factors of middle managers on the intention of execution for management consulting and understand the impacts of such an intention in terms of the management consulting experience of middle managers.

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Therefore, the research purpose of this article is to clarify the impacts of the personal factors and organizational factors of middle managers on the intention of execution for management consulting and test the moderating effect of management consulting experience in particular.

2. Previous Studies

Detailed studies on management consulting and performance are actively conducted, but there are not many on the perception of management consulting. Accordingly, there are definitions of perception by philosophers such as Kant, who stated that perception that is always consistent and valid to everyone is a perception with universal validity⁵. Kant's theory of perception is referred to as the constitution theory. Based on this theory, Kant stated that the sensible faculty works on miscellaneous matters given to humans, creating intuitions that are organized in terms of time and space; then, the faculty of intellectual thought works on this intuition, creating a true perception (inevitably and universally valid knowledge). Kant's theory of perception is a type of transcendental idealism. The reason why it is "transcendental" is that sensibility and intellect, which are humans' ability to perceive, are innate, and they form knowledge. This theory is divided into realism and idealism depending on whether the basis of objectivity lies in the external world or the internal condition of humans. Kant acknowledges these matters, but regards the target world as something that is not outside subjectivity but which is formed by subjectivity; thus, it is idealism²². Examining the perception and role of middle managers based on this perception, it can be seen that the role of middle managers is not merely accomplishing and managing business goals; yet, the development-oriented role of respecting the individual needs of the employees and promoting learning is being emphasized^{7,14,30}.

Porter³¹ defined business strategy as "the determination of the basic long-term goals of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals"⁹. Generic strategies are classified into cost leadership, differentiation, and focus, thus determining the profit potential by the principles of the five forces of competition. Generally, the middle managers of an organization are positioned between the management

level and working level. As leaders of units where business is measured by performance, they are acknowledged as the management level having the most important role and responsibility for achieving corporate goals, generally set by managers, senior managers, and executive managers²⁹.

Mohr²⁶ defined innovative activities as the entire process by which an organization creates new ideas, develops them, and commercializes them in order to fulfill the needs of the market or society. Katz and Kahn¹⁹ stated that innovative activities are regarded as extra-role behaviors. Fard and Ford¹³ presented the concept of task role innovation, which is an act of individual members intentionally adopting new and useful ideas, processes, products, and procedures related to their task roles.

Locke²⁴ states that satisfaction is an emotional response, and thus the definition of this concept can be discovered and understood only through the process of introspection. Therefore, Locke defines job satisfaction as the employee's pleasant or positive emotional state determined in the assessment of his or her job. McClelland²⁵ examined achievement needs by studying the high-order needs of Maslow's hierarchy of five needs, categorizing them into need for achievement, need for power, and need for affiliation. Of the three, the achievement need refers to the need to strive to succeed in order to achieve an outstanding goal. An and Yee³ stated that achievement need is the desire of individuals to achieve something difficult, overcome barriers and difficulties to achieve what they want, and enhance their value by fully displaying their abilities. Bass⁶ argues that people with high achievement needs tend to take the initiative in problem solving, presenting goals, and making enthusiastic efforts to achieve those goals. This tendency enables these people to produce better results than those with low achievement needs.

It is necessary to understand the concept of job insecurity in order to explain job security as an organizational psychological factor of middle level managers. Davy, Kinicki, and Scheck¹² defined job insecurity as the concept contrary to "the expectation for continuity of job situation." Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt¹⁵ defined job insecurity as the amount of threat felt by an individual with regard to a job, i.e., "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation". Ashford, Lee, and Bobko⁴ defined individual job insecurity as "helplessness perceived by not being able to control the threat despite the possibility that

the job might be lost due to a threatened job situation.” Based on the research findings of scholars, Choi¹¹ states that job security is “a difference in the level of perception by individual members of an organization.” With regard to the definitions and arguments about loyalty in organizational loyalty, Murray and Corenblum²⁷ argued that the term loyalty must be applied with a cognitive and behavioral context. In the field of organizational behavior, Allen and Mayer² explained the concept by classifying attitudinal loyalty into affective, calculative, and normative commitment.

On the basis of these previous studies, it can be deduced that people who are loyal to their organization

may willingly sacrifice their temporary benefits for the prosperity and benefit of that organization¹⁰.

3. Research Model, Hypotheses and Research Findings

3.1 Research Model

To test the impacts of personal (three subvariables) and organizational factors (two subvariables) of middle level managers on the intention of execution for management consulting, by focusing on the moderating effect of management consulting experience, this study established a research model as shown in Figure 1.

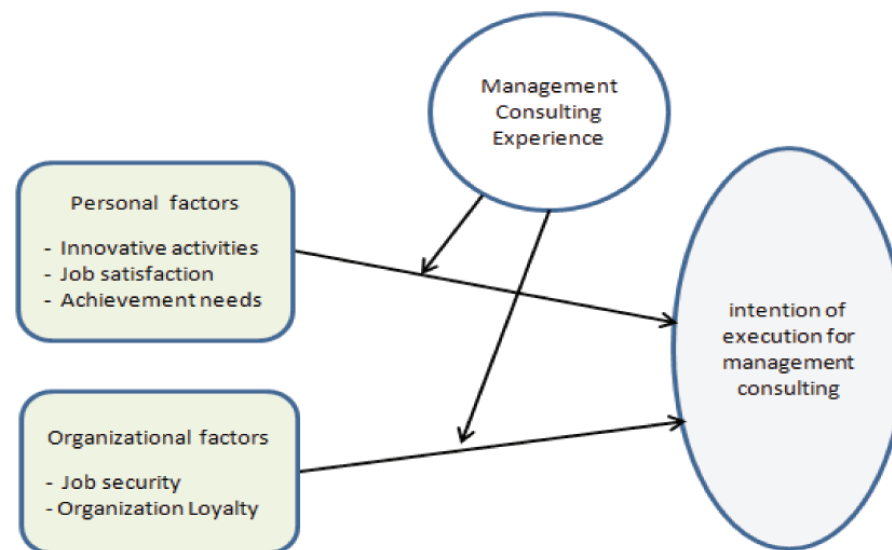


Figure 1. Research model.

3.2 Research Plan

Kant stated that perception that is always consistent and valid to everyone is a perception with universal validity⁵. Moreover, the top priority among a firm's goals to execute management consulting is to solve problems in business tasks, discover and use new opportunities, and increase execution of change and learning³³. Furthermore, Jeon¹⁸ argued that the outcome and process of consulting influences the business performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Based on these research findings, this study set the research hypotheses for the impact of personal factors on the intention of execution for management consulting.

H1: Innovative activity will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

H2: Job satisfaction will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

H3: Achievement demand will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

In addition, this study also set the hypotheses for the impacts of organizational factors on the intention of execution for management consulting.

H4: Job security will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

H5: Organizational loyalty will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

Furthermore, to examine the moderating effect of management consulting experience according to personal and organizational factors of middle level managers, this study set the following hypothesis.

H6: Management consulting experience will have a

moderating effect of personal and organizational factors on the intention of execution for management consulting.

3.3 Operational Definition and Measurement Tool of Variables

Table 1. Reliability and validity test

Variables	Operational Definition	Researcher
Innovative activities	Innovative activities within the organization by analyzing the overall perception of middle level managers	Zhou and George ³⁴ , Choi ¹¹
Job satisfaction	Sense of reward, achievement, aptitude, and overall fulfillment that indicates satisfaction felt by middle level managers in their jobs	Hackman and Oldham ¹⁶ , Oh ²⁸
Achievement needs	Covert needs to better accomplish and succeed in challenging goals that carry some risks	Kim ²⁰
Job security	High job security and high perception of management consulting	Black ⁸ , Quinn ³² , Ashford et al. ⁴
Organizational loyalty	Psychological phenomenon in which people who are loyal to their organization may willingly sacrifice their temporary benefits for the prosperity and benefits of the organization	King ²¹ , Ahmed and Rafiq ¹ , Hong ¹⁷ , Cho ¹⁰
Intention of execution for management consulting	Psychological state currently faced by the middle level managers in firms who have the experience of either receiving management consulting or not	Lee ²³

4. Research Design for Empirical Analysis

4.1 Survey Method

This study aims to examine the firms that are potential target of management consulting and verify the impacts of personal and organizational psychological factors of middle level managers on the intention of execution for management consulting. Therefore, data required for empirical analysis were collected through a survey on the sample firms. The survey was conducted from October 22, 2012 to November 9, 2012, and 207 out of a total 244 copies that had been distributed through direct survey were collected. A total of 189 copies of the collected questionnaire, excluding 18 copies that include missing data, were used in the analysis. The collected data was analyzed using SPSS and AMOS, with which frequency analysis, reliability analysis, factor analysis, and structural equation modeling analysis were conducted.

4.2 Sample Characteristics

The result of frequency analysis on the demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that it consisted of 76.7% males and 23.3% females. As for age distribution,

10.1% were between the ages of 20–29, 25.4% between 30–39, 49.7% between 40–49, and 14.8% of age 50 and above, indicating that most of the respondents were in their 40s.

As for the highest level of education, 10.1% were high school graduates or lower, 73.5% were college graduates (undergraduates) or lower, and 16.4% were graduate students or higher, which showed that 3/4 of the respondents were college graduates (undergraduates).

Regarding income distribution, 0.5% earned KRW1 million or lower, 38.1% earned KRW1–3 million, which was the highest percentage, 30.7% earned KRW3–5 million, 22.8% earned KRW5–7 million, and 7.9% earned higher than KRW7 million.

The distribution in terms of years of service showed that 13.8% worked for 1–3 years, 14.8% for 4–6 years, 10.6% for 7–10 years, 25.4% for 11–15 years, and 35.4% for 16 years or more, which was the highest percentage.

As for the departments of the respondents, 21.2% were in marketing, 55.6% in administration (management, human resources, finance, accounting, planning), which was the highest percentage, 1.1% in public relations, 1.1% in research and technology (R&D, advanced development), 3.7% in production (manufacturing technology, quality), and 17.5% in others.

In the case of firm size, 16.9% worked in small firms, 21.7% in medium-sized firms, 12.7% in firms of middle standing, 39.7% in conglomerates, which was the highest percentage, and 9.0% in others.

As for the industry, 40.7% worked in manufacturing, which was the highest percentage, 32.8% in service, 6.9% in wholesale and retail, 3.7% in construction, 0.5% in repair and other services, 1.1% in real estate and leasing service, and 14.3% in others.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing and Interpretation

For the measurement variables of this study, the nonconforming items were removed through the process of scale purification. First, an exploratory

factor analysis was conducted to test the validity, and a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted on all measurement variables to extract the component factors. To simplify factor loadings, orthogonal rotation (varimax) was used. The selection of items in this study was based on an Eigen value of at least 1.0 and a factor loading of at least 0.40.

Through the process of data cleansing of variables, ultimately four items apiece of innovative activities, job satisfaction, achievement needs, and job security were used in the analysis.

Moreover, all Cronbach alpha values were at least 0.6, securing the reliability of all factors. The results of the factor analysis and reliability analysis are as shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Reliability and validity test

Item	Factor Analysis						Reliability Analysis	
	<i>Component 1</i>	<i>Component 2</i>	<i>Component 3</i>	<i>Component 4</i>	<i>Component 5</i>	<i>Component</i>	<i>Alpha if item deleted</i>	<i>Cronbach α</i>
OL1	0.794	0.151	-0.123	0.261	0.037	0.738	0.848	0.88
OL2	0.836	-0.008	-0.128	0.273	0.043	0.792	0.831	
OL3	0.873	0.048	-0.094	0.186	0.13	0.824	0.817	
OL4	0.746	0.062	-0.124	0.019	0.334	0.688	0.883	
INNO1	0.045	0.763	0.018	0.193	0.251	0.684	0.838	0.868
INNO2	0.088	0.841	-0.04	0.191	0.121	0.767	0.829	
INNO3	0.036	0.793	-0.083	0.049	0.252	0.703	0.838	
INNO4	0.073	0.831	-0.026	0.067	0.224	0.751	0.821	
JSE2	-0.095	0.03	0.838	-0.071	-0.159	0.742	0.819	0.862
JSE3	-0.005	0.042	0.901	-0.077	-0.082	0.827	0.788	
JSE6	-0.278	-0.026	0.781	-0.025	0.08	0.696	0.838	
JSE7	-0.064	-0.166	0.795	-0.062	0.061	0.671	0.844	
JSA1	0.309	0.098	-0.063	0.722	0.324	0.736	0.79	0.854
JSA2	0.256	0.129	-0.015	0.69	0.398	0.717	0.805	
JSA3	0.075	0.15	-0.119	0.756	0.197	0.653	0.845	
JSA4	0.253	0.176	-0.076	0.802	0.082	0.751	0.813	
AD1	0.008	0.266	0.012	0.265	0.613	0.518	0.736	0.766
AD2	0.133	0.305	0.001	0.231	0.641	0.574	0.699	
AD4	0.33	0.287	-0.015	0.157	0.647	0.634	0.695	
AD5	0.116	0.189	-0.092	0.188	0.737	0.635	0.712	
Eigen-value	3.13	3.03	2.86	2.67	2.42			
Variance explanation (%)	15.63	15.15	14.27	13.35	12.11			

Table 3. Reliability and validity test

Item	Factor Analysis		Reliability Analysis	
	Component 1	Common	Alpha if item deleted	Cronbach α
IEMC 17	0.79	0.624	0.905	0.894
IEMC 19	0.892	0.796	0.853	
IEMC 20	0.879	0.772	0.862	
IEMC 21	0.926	0.858	0.83	
Eigen-value	3.049			
Variance explanation (%)	76.236			

(Note: Inno = innovative activities; JSA = job satisfaction; AD = achievement needs; JSE= job security; OL = organization loyalty; IEMC = intention of execution for management consulting)

4.4 Empirical Analysis

In terms of a reliability analysis of the perception of management consulting regarding personal factors and organizational factors of the collected data, all values were at least 0.7 as a result of using Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

Following the analysis, excluding some items of factors that hindered the one-dimensional aspect for the validity test, the eigen value was at least 2 for all items. The total variance was from 60.51% to 68.47% for each factor, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was from 76.6% to 88.0%. The KMO measurement result was 0.6 and above, and Bartlett's sphericity test value was $P < .001$, proving that there is no problem in conducting the factor analysis.

Moreover, the Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relevance of the variables in this study. The multicollinearity analysis was conducted to statistically verify whether there is a problem in the correlation among variables tied up as same factors. It was observed that each independent variable had the optimum level of correlation, thus showing no multicollinearity. Based on this result, an analysis was conducted using Amos 19.0 to examine the impacts of personal and organizational factors on the intention of execution for management consulting. Figure 2 shows the results of the structural equation test conducted on the research model.

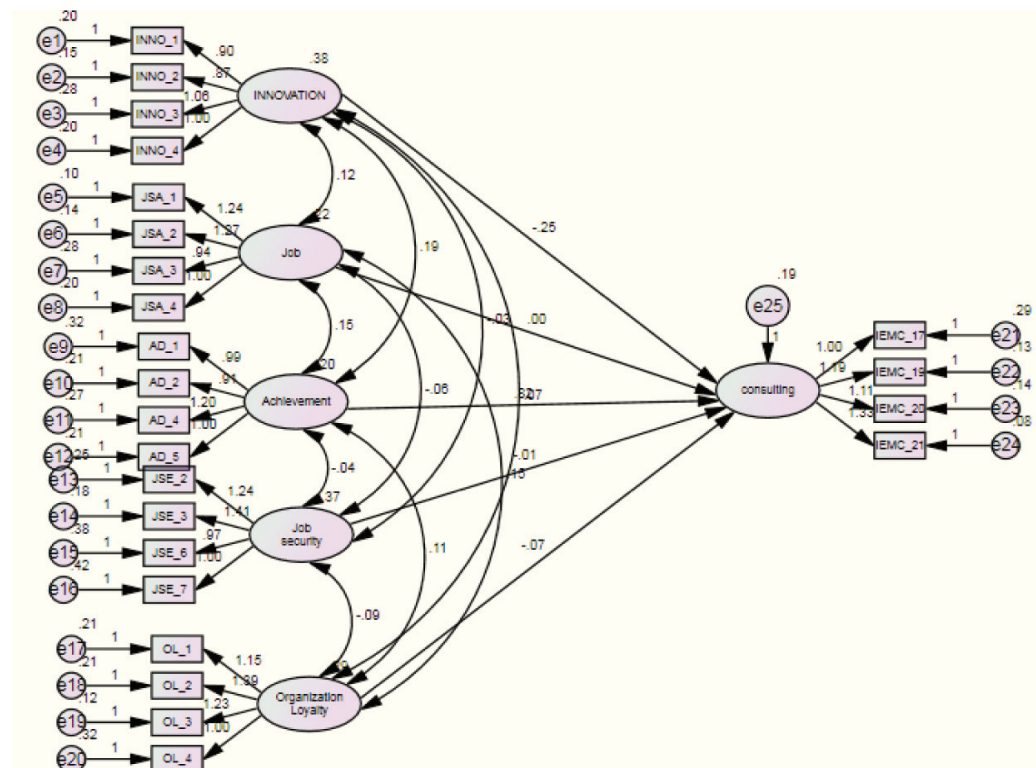


Figure 2. Result of model analysis.

(Note: Inno = innovative activities; JSA = job satisfaction; AD = achievement needs; JSE= job security; OL = organizational loyalty; consulting = intention of execution for management consulting; IEMC = intention of execution for management consulting)

The results showed that among personal and organizational factors, innovative activities and achievement needs turned out to have significant impacts.

Table 4. Management consulting action will and each variable analysis data

Variable Item	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Innovation → consulting	.119	-2.082	.037	Adopted
Job satisfaction → consulting	.170	.028	.977	Rejected
Achievement needs → consulting	.265	3.111	.002	Adopted
Job security → consulting	.068	-.117	.907	Rejected
Loyalty → consulting	.099	-.694	.488	Rejected

Table 4 above is the test result of the structure equation modeling of the proposed model. The model showed acceptable goodness of fit of the data. In particular, the result was $\chi^2 = 424.919$, $df = 237$, $p = 0.000$, $CMIN/DF = 1.793$, $AGFI = 0.813$, $CFI = 0.927$, $RMR = 0.032$, $RMSEA = 0.065$, $NFI = 0.85$, and $IFI = 0.928$.

The result of the hypothesis testing regarding the impacts of personal factors on the intention of execution for management consulting is analyzed as follows.

The path analysis result of H1, “innovative activity will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting,” showed that the hypothesis was accepted with a path coefficient of 0.119, C.R. of -2.082, and P value of 0.037. In other words, innovative activities turned out to have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

The path analysis result of H2, “job satisfaction will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting,” showed that the hypothesis was rejected with a path coefficient of 0.170, C.R. of 0.028, and P value of 0.977. This is a clear indication that job satisfaction does not have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

The path analysis result of H3, “Achievement demand will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting,” showed that the hypothesis was accepted with the path coefficient of 0.265, C.R. of 3.111, and P value of 0.002. In other words, achievement needs turned out to have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

Moreover, the result of the hypothesis testing regarding the impact of organizational factors on the intention of execution for management consulting is as follows.

The path analysis result of H4, “job security will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting,” showed that the hypothesis was rejected with a path coefficient of 0.068, C.R. of -0.117, and P value of 0.907.

Moreover, the path analysis result of H5, “organizational loyalty will have a positive impact on the intention of execution for management consulting,” showed that the hypothesis was rejected with a path coefficient of 0.099, C.R. of -0.694, and P value of 0.488. In other words, job security and organizational loyalty did not have any impact on the intention of execution for management consulting.

Next, this study tested H6, “management consulting experience will have a moderating effect of personal factors and organizational factors on the intention of execution for management consulting.”

As in Table 5, the test results showed that innovative activities, job satisfaction, achievement needs of personal factors, and job security and organization loyalty of organizational factors did not have a moderating effect according to management consulting experience. In other words, middle level managers have the same perception on the intention of execution for management consulting regardless of whether they have experienced management consulting or not.

Table 5. Control effect analysis results on consulting experience of management consulting action will

Division	Experience	No Experience
	Analysis Result C.R.(p value)	Analysis Result C.R.(p value)
Innovative activity	-2.082(0.037)	-2.944(0.003)
Job satisfaction	0.028(0.977)	0.040(0.968)
Achievement demand	3.111(0.002)	4.399(***)
Job security	-0.117(0.907)	-0.166(0.869)
Organization loyalty	-0.694(0.488)	-0.981(0.327)

5. Discussion

In sum, the research findings are intended to verify the determinants of the perception of management consulting by focusing on the psychological factors of middle level managers. These factors are classified into personal factors that include innovative activities, job satisfaction, and achievement needs, and organizational factors that

include job security and organizational loyalty. This study aimed at verifying the impacts of these variables on the perception of executing management consulting. Moreover, it also aimed to verify the moderating effect on the intention of execution depending on the management consulting experience of middle level managers.

Ultimately, the research model was organized to verify what psychological factors of middle level managers act as the determinants that affect the perception of executing management consulting, and whether there are impacts depending on management consulting experience. Through this verification process, this study identified the determinants of the intention of execution for management consulting so as to facilitate the decision making for future execution of management consulting. The findings of this research can be summarized as follows.

The factors of middle level managers regarding the intention of execution for management consulting had a positive impact on achievement needs and negative impact on innovative activities. It was found that they did not have any impact on other factors such as job satisfaction, job security, and organization loyalty. Furthermore, it was observed that management consulting experience did not have a moderating effect on the perception of the execution of management consulting.

This study provides useful data for marketing strategies of management consulting agencies. However, it has limitations in the interpretation of the results as it targets only the psychological factors of middle level managers. Therefore, a follow-up research on various levels of the organization, such as the top management, would possibly produce more significant results.

6. References

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