

## CFPR SEMINAR SERIES (JAN-APR 2025)

# DEINSTITUTIONALIZING OVERWORK AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE



07 March 2025  
12PM – 1:30PM (SGT)  
AS7-O6-42  
Seminar Room



### Session chaired by:

Assistant Prof. Senhu Wang  
(CFPR Steering Committee Member &  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

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The organizational practice of long work hours has been theorized as a significant obstacle to advancing gender equity in the labor market. A key premise is that institutional environments promoting overwork—beyond individual choice—are a root cause of labor market gender inequality. This study leverages South Korea's 2018 implementation of the 52-hour workweek rule, which regulated long work hours, to examine how institutional overwork may exacerbate gender inequality: the exclusion of women from the workplace. Using data from the restricted-access Regional Employment Survey (2016–2019), I employ a difference-in-differences design to assess changes in the proportion of female workers in firms affected by the rule. I find that firms subject to the rule experienced a greater increase in the proportion of female workers compared to those not affected. An analysis of heterogeneous effects supports the mechanism that female full-time employees, particularly mothers, are more likely to retain their jobs as a result of the regulation. Deinstitutionalizing overwork through government regulation can foster more inclusive workplaces for women and reduce the gender gap in full-time employment rates, underscoring the crucial role of workplace time demands in shaping gender inequality.

## OUR SPEAKER



**Dr. Ohjae Gowen**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

Ohjae Gowen is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Singapore Management University. His research agenda centers on how the responsibility of childrearing is unevenly distributed across different stakeholders in society—such as families, the state, and the market. In particular, he investigates why the labor of childrearing is unequally shared between mothers and fathers and the wider implications of these gendered family roles on social inequality and demographic behaviors. He often uses large-scale longitudinal data and quantitative methods to answer these questions. The regional focus of his research includes South Korea and the United States, as well as other Asian countries. He received his Ph.D. in Sociology from Harvard University in 2024.