

## CURRENT JOB, DESIRABLE JOB, AND GOOD JOB\*

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*This paper examines several issues concerning people's perception on the desirable job. Its basic assumption is that examining a desirable job will contribute to a better understanding on the quality of a current job. Major findings from our studies may be summarized as follows. First, speaking of the desirability, we find that self-employment, jobs in large firms, and jobs in the public sector are generally considered to be desirable over working as employees, jobs in medium to small firms, and jobs in the private sector. Second, the process through which such preferences are formed seems to be multi-dimensional in nature. Current job is central to understanding such preference, but gender and age also seem to play an important role. Third, among these three sets of preferences, we find that the preference for self-employment needs to be interpreted rather differently from preferences for large firms and for the public sector. It appears that the preference for self-employment stems from the 'boundedness of preference for self-employment' among the labor force in Korea. For the general picture that arises from our study is that self-employment may be a factor that constitutes a good job for some people, but that such people are likely to be the ones who are rather disadvantaged in the labor market.*

**Key Words:** *desirable job, current job, self-employment, good job, labor market*

### INTRODUCTION

The quality or goodness of jobs held by paid workers is clearly one of the central variables in the literature on labor markets, as it is seen to be an important determinant of living standards of members in a society. There are also suggestions on the links between job quality and the labor market related to individual attitudes and behaviors, such as the job commitment, job performance, absenteeism, and voluntary turnover at workplaces (Carsten and Spector, 1987).

Accordingly, there have been many attempts from different

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disciplines to measure the quality of a job. Economists, for example, have discussed the importance of economic rewards from the job, such as income and other economic supplements in evaluating the job quality. In sociology, several scholars have suggested that occupational status score and the socioeconomic index provide the basic standards for the goodness or badness of a job (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Ganzeboom et al., 1989). However, these approaches offer only a very limited understanding of the quality of a job. Occupational status is a very limited indicator of job desirability since the variation within occupational categories was found to be as great as that between occupational categories. Similarly, economists have no common measure of jobs' non-monetary benefits and costs (Jencks et al., 1998).

Therefore, another aspect that has been examined to be important in evaluating the quality of a job is the job characteristics. For example, Loher et al. (1985) and Vroom (1964) argue that the nature of work itself and social relationships at work as well as the economic benefits from work are important determinants in evaluating the quality of a job. Therefore, variables such as the level of autonomy, perceived control over the work process, complexity of the job, pay level, and the degree of satisfaction with co-workers are used as indicators for the quality of a job (Loher et al., 1985). Additional properties of a job, such as the use of skill and whether one is in a position to exercise authority at work have also been considered as important factors in determining the quality of a job (Vroom, 1964).

More recently, Jencks et al. (1998) developed an index of job desirability based on the weights given to different characteristics of jobs by workers. Non-monetary characteristics of jobs (such as access to training, low risk of job loss, and characteristics of the job) and some other variables on characteristics of a job, such as the hours of work, control over work hours, and whether the job was dirty were examined. It is found that the ranking of desirable job characteristics differs little between men and women or by age, and that non-monetary characteristics of jobs were twice as important as earnings. A striking finding of this study was that the use of the index doubled the level of labor market inequality compared to earnings inequality. It was also found that men's jobs were significantly better than those of women with respect to non-compensation items, and that unionization was associated with higher job desirability.

On the other hand, there are those who argue that there are subjective factors at play in people's evaluation of the quality of a job.

For example, Smith et al. (1969) and Locke (1976) dealt with the importance of subjective job evaluation for the definition and measurement of a good job in the field of industrial psychology. The variety of aspects relating to job evaluation in psychology include the enjoyment of life, the amenities of home life, job security, the possibility of upward mobility, and so on. There are also studies which argue that personal traits (Staw and Ross, 1985), affective disposition during early adolescence (Staw et al., 1986), and genetic basis (Gehart, 1987; Arvey et al., 1989) are important determinants of an individual's evaluation of the quality of a job. The implicit assumption underlying these studies is that job evaluation varies because individual affective dispositions vary. Therefore, Staw and Ross (1985) examined the job satisfaction rating of workers over various time intervals controlling for changes in employers and occupations, and found that job satisfaction comes from the personological make-up of the individuals. Similarly, Staw et al. (1986) presented evidence that the overall job attitudes of adults are significantly predicted from affective disposition during early adolescence. Moreover, Arvey et al. (1989) suggested that 30% of observed variance in job evaluation could be attributed to genetic factors when controlling for job characteristics.

Considering the wide range of variables argued to be important in determining the quality of a job, it is not surprising that researchers cannot agree on a good formal definition of job quality. In Korea, Phang and Lee (2006) built a complex index to measure the goodness of individuals' current jobs on the basis of three prominent dimensions; social status, financial reward, and subjective satisfaction. This led them to argue that a multi-dimensional definition of job quality may be a better alternative to its one-dimensional definition. Although a multi-dimensional definition of job quality offers a lot of advantages for measuring the quality of job, its definition requires a variety of information on current jobs including social status, financial rewards, and subjective satisfaction and so on. Such detailed information is not readily available in most social surveys. Only very preliminary information is usually available regarding job quality. While most people want to work stable and predictable hours, detailed information on work schedules has become available only in recent years. While most people want to work in jobs which are safe and healthy, information on the incidence of physical hazards at work is surprisingly limited. Perhaps more strikingly, remarkably little is known about the detailed characteristics of jobs in terms of meeting

the needs of workers. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a more practical conceptualization and measurement to capture individuals' job quality.

The approach that we take in this paper is to use a desirable job as a simpler proxy to measure people's evaluation on the goodness of a job. Since labor market participation is a highly competitive activity, one has to experience various sorts of complex decisions. People's perception of a desirable job plays an important role during such decision-making processes. In particular, understanding dimensions along which a conceptualization of desirable jobs is formed may provide insights into the process through which evaluation of job quality is made. In this paper, we examine three aspects of a job as they relate to a desirable and, ultimately, to a good job; firm size (large vs. medium to small firms), sector (public vs. private), and employment status (employees vs. self-employed).<sup>1</sup>

We choose these three variables primarily because the data-set we analyze contains information on these variables as they relate to a desirable job. In analyzing these three aspects of a job, we also examine the relationship between the current and desirable job. Much literature shows that when people perceive unhappiness in the workplace, they frequently experience cognitive tensions and a drive to find another type of job (Carsten and Spector, 1987; Griffeth and Gaertner, 2001; Wagner and Huber, 2003). More specifically, individuals who are satisfied with their current jobs are less likely to expect or seek another type of job. Conversely, those who are dissatisfied with their current jobs are more likely to expect or seek another type of job (Darity and Goldsmith, 1996). Therefore, by analyzing the relationship between the current and desirable job, we may gain an understanding of the dynamics involved in evaluating the quality of a job.

Furthermore, in analyzing the relationship between the current and desirable job, we also include two basic demographic variables, sex and age, in our models and examine how they operate in the relationship between the current and desirable job. These two variables are primary variables that have bearings on an individual's status within the labor market. As such, their association with the current job needs to be taken care of in order to better understand the process through which the current job affects the desirable job.

<sup>1</sup> As was stated before, there are many variables that have been examined to affect the quality of a good job.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we examine the three aspects of a job (firm size, sector, and employment status) that we consider to be important attributes in affecting people's perceptions of a good job. Desirable job may be a subjective indicator for a good job in the sense that it merely shows people's preferences. However, it can also be an objective indicator in the sense that such preferences are likely to be strongly influenced by labor market situations and practices. Therefore, we examine both the subjective (such as job satisfaction) and objective (such as earnings) aspects of the three attributes of jobs in Korea. Section 3 describes the data set that we analyze and our analysis techniques. Results from our analyses are reported in section 4, which is then followed by some discussion in section 5.

#### FIRM SIZE, SECTOR, AND EMPLOYMENT STATUS IN KOREA

##### *Firm Size (Large vs. Medium to Small)*

It seems to be generally true that large firms pay more than small firms. For example, in the United States, workers in large companies earn over 30 percent more in wages than those in small companies. There are several hypotheses on this wage premium of employees in large firms, such as that large companies hire workers of higher quality, large companies offer higher wages to compensate for inferior working conditions, and higher pay in large companies is used as part of a union avoidance strategy. Several studies have attempted to test these hypotheses and have found evidence for some of these hypotheses, especially for the first hypothesis that large companies hire workers of higher quality (Brown and Medoff, 1989; Green et al., 1996; Reilly, 1993). However, even after controlling for these factors, the employer size premium still remains at about 10 percent (Brown et al., 1990), leaving much to be further explained in order to identify the reasons for large firms to pay more.

Does firm size effect on earnings exist among workers in Korea? Until the mid 1980s, firm size effect on earnings was observed only among white-collar workers, while it was absent among production workers (Chung, 1985; Song, 1991). It seemed to reflect the relatively disadvantaged position of production workers in the Korean labor market until that time. Production workers as a whole seemed to be placed in an open labor market, while at least some of the white-collar

workers (those in large companies) seemed to be placed in a protected internal labor market. However, the situation began to change after the upsurge of labor movements in 1987. The unionization of production workers enabled them to obtain greater bargaining power, and it seems to have resulted in labor market segmentation among production workers, which is similar among white-collar workers. Therefore, after the 1990s, the wage premium in large firms is observed not only among white-collar workers but also among production workers as well (Kim, 1997; Hwang, 1996; Song and Cho, 1994).

That a job in large firms may be a better job than that in small firms is also hinted when we examine the subjective aspect, job satisfaction. Those in large companies exhibit a higher level of job satisfaction than those in small firms (Park, 1996), and this seems to translate into a lower job turnover rate of those in large firms than those in small firms (Jeon, 1996; Song and Cho, 1994). Therefore, examining both objective and subjective aspects of a job with respect to firm size, we can expect that jobs in large firms would be more likely to be considered as good jobs than those in small firms.

#### *Sector (Public vs. Private)*

Traditionally, the Confucian legacy in Korea places bureaucrats at the top of a hierarchically determined society (Thomas and Postlethwaite, 1983). This perception of government officials as upper class is further strengthened by Korea's unique economic development since the 1960s, as government officials took an active lead in the development process of economic policies. For example, the Economic Planning Board was established in 1961, and a program of rapid industrialization based on exports was launched by the government. Therefore, in Korea, being a public official has been regarded to be highly prestigious in general.

If we look into it in more detail, however, the situation seems to have been more complicated. Although the degree of the wage gap between those in the public sector and those in the private sector differed by the rank of the government job and also by the educational attainment level (Kim et al., 2000), generally speaking, those in the public sector were paid less than those in the private sector (Kim, 1996). Those in the public sector also exhibited a lower level of satisfaction over their lives than those in the private sector, which was

interpreted as stemming from their long hours of work, lower pay, and difficulty in upward mobility (Kim and Cho, 2000).

However, since the end of the 1990s or so, the situation began to change. Since the economic crisis of November 1997, the Korean economy has experienced a sharp downturn. For example, a rise in unemployment has been quite remarkable since the crisis. Before the crisis, the unemployment rate had been rather stable in the range between 2 percent and 3 percent. Yet it rose sharply to 7.0 percent in 1998 (KNSO, 2006). This rise in the unemployment rate was largely due to bankruptcies of small and medium-sized firms. At the same time, corporate restructuring in large firms has also taken place since the crisis, resulting in reforms in employment relations. Before the crisis, employment relations in Korean large companies resembled that of the Japanese system of lifetime employment and seniority-based wage system. Since the crisis, however, these began to change. Not only did companies begin to hire more workers on a contract basis and as irregular workers, even the regular workers could no longer expect to remain in the company until retirement (Visco, 1999; Kwon, 2002; Haggard et al., 2003).

With these changes occurring in the private sector, the public sector seems to have emerged as a hope for many, because jobs in the public sector are more or less protected against lay-offs until retirement. There are no academic analyses on this phenomenon yet, but if we examine daily newspapers, there have been more and more articles on this phenomenon since 2001. They report on an ever increasing competition rate of entry examinations for jobs of all ranks in the public sector. For example, the number of applicants for the lowest rank jobs doubled since 2000, from 90,000 in 2000 to 180,000 in 2005 (Kyunghyang Daily News, 2006).

To sum up, the labor market situation with regard to sector seems to be more complicated than the firm size, and it is not clear whether people would show a preference for one over the other.

#### *Employment Status (Employee vs. Self-employed)*

As has been the case in most other industrialized countries, the proportion of self-employed workers in the Korean labor market has steadily decreased since the beginning of industrialization. For example, while 52.8 percent of those in the labor market worked as self-employed workers in 1980, the proportion went down to 36.7

percent in 1996. For some years after the economic crisis in 1997, however, the trend reversed and the proportion went up to 38.3 percent in 1998 and 37.6 percent in 1999. Since 1999, the proportion of self-employed workers began to decrease again and was observed to be 33.6 percent as of 2005 (Kim and Cho, 2006).

How does the self-employed compare with employees in the labor market? Here we need to be somewhat careful because the self-employed consist of two rather distinct groups of people. This has been shown in many studies which compare the self-employed with employees in terms of individual and occupational attributes (Ahn, 2000; Jeon, 2003; Keum and Cho, 2000; Kim, 2000; Sung, 2002). It is also evident in studies which basically tested the push vs. pull hypotheses regarding entry into self-employment, that whether self-employment is the last resort for those pushed out of the employee status in the labor market or is a voluntary choice of workers who are attracted to self-employment for various reasons. Studies find that in Korea, the push hypothesis is generally true for the majority of the self-employed, but that there exists a small group of self-employed workers for whom self-employment was a voluntary choice (Kim and Cho, 2006; Ryoo, 2004).

For the sake of empirical analyses, many have used the distinction of employer (self-employed who work with several hired employees) versus self-employed (those who work by himself/herself) in order to separate the two distinct groups of people within the self-employment sector. Upon using such a distinction, studies find that employers clearly do better than employees in terms of earnings (Ryoo, 2004; Sung and Ahn, 2002). With regard to job satisfaction, however, researchers disagree on whether employers have a higher level of job satisfaction than employees (Kim and Kim, 2001; Koo, 2006). As for the other group of self-employed workers, the self-employed, their earnings are found to be generally lower than those of employees, and their level of job satisfaction is also found to be lower than employees (Koo, 2006; Sung and Ahn, 2002).

Therefore, as was the case for the sectors, the situation seems to be somewhat complicated for employment status, and it is not certain how employment status would fare in people's perceptions of a good job.

## DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data are drawn from the 2005 round of the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS). The KGSS provides the best currently available national information on stratification and other social issues. It is the leading project to collect data from probability samples since 2003, and the project has enabled comparative studies in various areas.

At the rounds, the KGSS asked respondents pertinent questions about their jobs: (i) types of jobs (ii) employment status, i.e., employment/unemployment, employee/self-employer/employer and (iii) where they considered the desirable jobs exist, i.e., the government, public enterprises, public institutions, and private companies. These three questions yield basic classifications between current jobs and desirable jobs. For each respondent, we constructed a contingency table by allocating respondents according to their current situation (current jobs) and preference (desirable jobs).

For the data analysis, two basic methodologies are used. First, the basic procedure is to examine the percentage of respondents by their characteristics such as gender, educational levels, and so on. As its first step, a contingency table between current jobs and desirable jobs is constructed along with several sub-tables by the characteristics. For example, suppose that we are to test the statement that there is no difference in respondents between men and women, i.e. the response is independent of the gender of the person interviewed (which we adopt as our null hypothesis). Now if the statement is not true, then the response will depend on the gender of the person interviewed, and the table will enable us to calculate the degree of dependence. A table constructed in this way (to indicate dependence or association) is called a contingency table. It means dependence. Thus, the purpose of a contingency table analysis is to determine whether dependence exists between the two qualitative variables.

Second, in order to provide a general picture on respondents' job preference, correspondence analysis is employed. The correspondence analysis is a descriptive/exploratory technique to analyze simple two-way and multi-way contingency tables. The results provide information which is similar in nature to those produced by other data reduction techniques, such as factor analysis, cluster analysis, and multi-dimensional scaling. The correspondence analysis allows one to explore the detailed structure of categorical variables included in the table. In a typical correspondence analysis, a contingency table is first

standardized, so that the relative frequencies across all cells sum to 1.0. One way to state the goal of a typical analysis is to represent the entries in the table of relative frequencies in terms of the distances between individual rows and/or columns in a low-dimensional space. There are several parallels in interpretation between correspondence analysis and various types of data reduction analyses and some similar concepts (Greenacre and Underhill, 1981 Greenacre, 1984).

## RESULTS

### *Characteristics of Current and Desirable Jobs*

Table 1 shows the distribution of frequencies and percentages of variables for the analysis. It shows that there are 45.6 percent of males and 54.4 percent of females 20.5 percent of respondents are in their 20s, 45.3 percent are in their 30s and 40s, and 34.2 percent are in their 50s and over. As for the current job, 44.1 percent of all respondents identify themselves as unemployed. It is the category with the highest frequency for the current job, and this result occurs mainly because housewives belong to this category 25.7 percent of respondents identify themselves as employees in the private sector, whereas 8.5 percent

**TABLE 1.** GENDER, AGE, CURRENT JOBS, AND DESIRABLE JOBS

Variables	Value	Frequencies	Percentage
Gende	Male	736	45.6
	Female	877	54.4
Age	Less and 29	331	20.5
	30-49	730	45.3
	50 and over	552	34.2
Current Jo	Employee (private)	415	25.7
	Employee (public)	137	8.5
	Self-Employed	349	21.6
	Unemployed	712	44.1
Employee vs. Self-Employe	Employee	534	34.5
	Self-Employed	1,012	65.5
Small vs. Larg	Small Firm	530	32.9
	Large Firm	999	61.9
Private vs. Public secto	Private sector	502	33.0
	Public sector	1,020	67.0

of respondents do so as employees in the public sector 21.6 percent of respondents identify themselves as self-employed. In this table, we also examine the distribution of desirable jobs. Respondents were asked to make a choice between the two characteristics of jobs with respect to the three aspects of employment; employment status (employee vs. self-employed), firm size (large vs. medium to small), and the sector (public vs. private). The data indicate that 65.5 percent of respondents desire to work as self-employed while the remaining 34.5 percent desire to work as an employee. A similar pattern is found for the firm size and the sector, almost two-thirds of the respondents desired to work in large firms (61.9%) over small firms (32.9%), and about two-thirds of the respondents preferred the public (67.0%) to private sector (33.0%).

#### *Choice of Desirable Job*

In order to examine these aspects of a desirable job further, we examine associations among such preferences and other variables, such as the current job, gender, and age. Log-linear analyses are carried out to examine the associations. First, Table 2 presents a procedure to examine an association between the preference for employment status and other variables.

Model 1 assumes no interaction of desirable job with other variables. In model 2, association between employment status and current job is added. An association between a desirable job and gender is added in model 3, and an association between a desirable job and age is added in model 4. However, all these models are rejected. Model 5 includes all two-way interaction effects. This does not reject the null hypothesis that chi-square is zero, and the improvement in fit is significant. This

**TABLE 2.** MODEL OF DESIRABLE JOB (EMPLOYEE VS. SELF-EMPLOYED), GENDER, AGE, AND CURRENT JOB

Model	L2	Degree of Freedom	P-Value
1. [E][C][G][A]	115.664	23	.000
2. [EC][G][A]	167.187	20	.000
3. [EC][ES][A]	150.740	19	.000
4. [EC][EA][G]	141.945	18	.001
5. [EC][ES][EA]	121.489	17	.205

E: Employee vs. Self-employed; S: Gender; A: Age; C: Current Job

**TABLE 3.** MODEL OF DESIRABLE JOB (LARGE VS. SMALL FIRM), GENDER, AGE, AND CURRENT JOB

Model	L <sup>2</sup>	Degree of Freedom	P-Value
1. [F][C][G][A]	67.473	23	.000
2. [FC][G][A]	56.238	20	.000
3. [FC][FG][A]	54.512	19	.000
4. [FC][FA][G]	21.463	18	.071
5. [FC][FG][FA]	25.004	17	.095

F: Small vs. Large Firm; G: Gender; A: Age; C: Current Job

**TABLE 4.** MODEL OF DESIRABLE JOB (PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC SECTOR), GENDER, AGE, AND CURRENT JOB

Model	L <sup>2</sup>	Degree of Freedom	P-Value
1. [P][C][G][A]	61.151	23	.000
2. [PC][G][A]	28.260	20	.000
3. [PC][PG][A]	12.693	19	.854
4. [PC][PA][G]	21.463	18	.078
5. [PC][PG][PA]	11.533	17	.828

P: Private vs. Public Sector; G: Gender; A: Age; C: Current Job

result means that the preference for employment status is not simply determined by the current job. It is also affected by other demographic background variables, such as gender and age.

Second, we explore the association between the preference for firm size and other variables. Again, a series of log-linear models are employed. The variables included in these models are firm size, current job, gender, and age. Table 3 demonstrates the procedure of selecting log-linear models. In model 1, no association between firm size and other variables is assumed. Models 2 through 5 allow two-way association. The model including the two-way association of gender and age as well as the current job is accepted.

Finally, the preference for sector is examined. Again, the independence model and the model including only the association between the sector and current job are rejected. Two-way interactions assumed in models 2 through 5. These models are accepted. However, considering the degree of freedom and l-square, model 3 is selected as the best model. This model indicates that the preference for the sector is affected by gender and the current job.

To further elaborate on these findings, another step is introduced to

show a detailed relationship between the current job and desirable job. In this step, a series of joint-correspondence analysis are used to explore the data. The analysis is mainly intended to reveal the features in each category of related variables. Especially, the joint-correspondence analysis is primarily applicable to a contingency table where the associations between more than two categorical variables are of interest.

To begin with, we compare the current and desirable job involving four variables: current job, employment status, firm size, and the sector. The variables have 4, 2, 2, and 2 levels, respectively. Let us

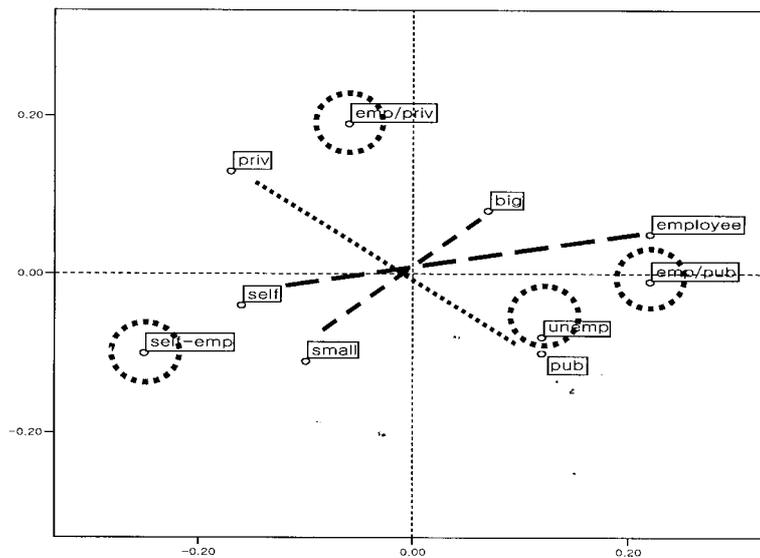


FIGURE 1. THE JOINT-CORRESPONDENCE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT JOB AND DESIRABLE JOB

TABLE 5. EUCLIDIAN DISTANCE AMONG DESIRABLE JOBS (FOR ALL AXES)

	Employee	Self-Employed	Small Firm	Large Firm	Private Sector	Public Sector
Employee	0.000	0.270	0.250	0.110	0.280	0.130
Self-Employed	0.270	0.000	0.080	0.180	0.120	0.200
Small Firm	0.250	0.080	0.000	0.190	0.180	0.160
Large Firm	0.110	0.180	0.190	0.000	0.170	0.130
Private Sector	0.280	0.120	0.180	0.170	0.000	0.260
Public Sector	0.130	0.200	0.160	0.130	0.260	0.000

TABLE 6. EUCLIDIAN DISTANCE AMONG CURRENT JOBS (FOR ALL AXES)

	Employee (private)	Employee (public)	Self-Employed	Unemployed
Employee(private)	0.000	0.250	0.240	0.230
Employee(public)	0.250	0.000	0.340	0.100
Self-Employed	0.240	0.340	0.000	0.260
Unemployed	0.230	0.100	0.260	0.000

suppose that one of the four variables, say current job, can be considered as the describing variable whereas others described variables. A correspondence analysis is performed on the multiple tables to display a relationship between each of the three aspects of a desirable job and the current job.

Figure 1 shows a relative position of each category of the variables. Table 5 and Table 6 present the distance of each category of current job and desirable job. Combined, these results show the following. First, employees in the public sector exhibit a strong preference for work as employees in large firms and in the public sector. Second, while employees in the private sector also prefer to work in large firms, they tend to prefer to work in the private sector and their preference as for employment status seems to lean towards self-employment. Third, the self-employed prefer to work as self-employed, and to work in small firms and in the private sector. Fourth, the unemployed show a strong preference for working in the public sector.

Implications on dimensions of a good job obtained from these findings may be summarized as follows. First, people's perceptions of a desirable job seem to be closely related to their current job. While employees generally prefer to work as employees, the self-employed prefer to work as self-employed. Second, despite such continuity between the current and desirable job, there seems to be a certain dimension along which people do exhibit certain preferences. Working in the public sector is generally desired more than working in the private sector, and working in large firms seems to be desired more than working in small firms. Moreover, those who desire to work in the public sector desire to work in large firms and vice versa, which suggests that large firms and the public sector are perceived to be attributes of a good job. Third, people's perceptions of a desirable job seem to be formed not only from their desire for a good job but also

from a more realistic judgment of their relative position in the labor market. While there is generally a high level of preference for work in large firms and in the public sector, those who prefer to work as self-employed prefer to work in small firms and in the private sector. Similarly, those who prefer to work in small firms or to work in the private sector prefer to work as the self-employed. We think this illustrates the 'bounded rationality' of people, that people do form perceptions of a good job with a fairly good understanding of their own competitiveness in the labor market.

## DISCUSSION

This research has examined several issues concerning the evaluation of the quality of a job. Its basic assumption is that examining a desirable job will contribute to a fuller evaluation of the quality of a current job. Major findings from our studies may be summarized as follows.

First, speaking of the desirability, we find that self-employment, jobs in large firms, and jobs in the public sector are generally considered to be desirable over working as employees, jobs in medium to small firms, and jobs in the private sector. More than 65 percent of respondents preferred to work as self-employed, about 62 percent of the respondents reported a preference for jobs in large firms, and about 67 percent reported a preference for jobs in the public sector.

Second, as shown in the log-linear analysis, the process through which such preferences are formed seems to be multi-dimensional in nature. The current job is central to understanding such preference, but gender and age also seem to play important roles. Especially, age is more important in the preference for jobs in the public sector.

Third, among these three sets of preferences, we find that the preference for self-employment needs to be interpreted rather differently from preferences for large firms and for the public sector. This is because we find that firm size and sector go together in the dimension of being a good job, for example, those who prefer large firms prefer to work in the public sector and vice versa. That is, a job in big firms and in the public sector seem to be perceived as a factor that constitutes a good job. However, the story for employment status is quite different. For example, those who prefer to work as self-employed are the ones who prefer to work in small firms and in the private sector. This is also evident when looking at how the

current job affects the desirable job. While current employees in the public sector prefer to work as employees in the public sector, current self-employed prefer to work as self-employed and in small firms, and current employees in the private sector seem to lean towards the current self-employed.

So what do these imply in terms of the goodness of jobs in self-employment? We think that these show the 'boundedness of preference for self-employment' among the labor force in Korea. As was previously discussed, there have been several studies which have tried to explain whether the self-employed workers in Korean labor markets are pushed or pulled into that sector, and the general agreement from those studies so far has been that workers are mostly pushed into the self-employment sector. The general picture that arises from our study is also that self-employment may be a factor that constitutes a good job for some people, but that such people are likely to be the ones who are rather disadvantaged in the labor market.

Although we interpreted such finding in terms of 'bounded rationality' of people, that people do form perceptions of a good job considering their competitiveness in the labor market, we only have limited understanding of what produces such competitiveness of an individual. While it can come from the respondents themselves (i.e., subjective evaluation of an individual's competitiveness in the labor market), it may also come from more structural features in the labor market (i.e., discrimination against women and the old, as shown by the interaction effect of gender and age). As long as the issue of 'goodness of job' is an important issue not only for individual well-being but also for its implications on social stratification, identifying sources that produce such boundedness in preference among certain groups of people seems to be an important task that we need to work on in the future.

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