

Why Female Marriage Immigrants in Korea Feel Stressed after Immigrating to Korea?

Background

Since the 2000s, International marriage between Korean men and foreign women has increased rapidly. The international marriage rate of them accounted for 8% of all marriages in Korea in 2010 and there are 188,590 female marriage immigrants who reside in Korea (Ministry of Public Administration and Security, 2012). Of the female marriage immigrants, 36.6% are from China, 36.6%, from Vietnam, and 7.3% from the Philippines (Statistics Korea, 2011). According to World Health Organization (1997), female immigrants are the most marginalized group from society, and more vulnerable to mental illness compared to male immigrants or non-immigrants. Female immigrants are more likely to be alienated from society for their sex, race, and status, and adapting in new circumstances put them under stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Chen, 1999). Therefore, this study find out stress factors and provide evidence to develop stress intervention program to help female marriage immigrants in Korea to cope with stress and adapt themselves to Korean society.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to find out the stressor for female marriage immigrants in Korea. The research questions asked are as follows: 1) When do you feel stressed after you immigrated to Korea? 2) What made you most stressful after you immigrated to Korea? 3) What do you think the cause of stress would be?

Method

The subjects of this study are thirteen women who have immigrated to Korea from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Four of them live in rural areas while the other nine live in urban areas. The women were classified into three groups according to their residential areas, home countries, and years of residence, and given a focus group interview. Interviews were recorded in the form of MP3, transcribed, and then thematic analysis was carried out.

Results

The average age of the participants is 32.9 years old. 6 are from China, 3 from Vietnam and 4 from the Philippines. The time since immigration of participants ranges from 2 to 9 years (table 1). Through interviews stressors are classified as culture, economy, society, family, emotion, and parenting. The main themes of each stressor are as follows (table 2) :

Cultural stressor: The main themes verified from the cultural stressors are cultural differences and language problems. They were under stress for differences in ways to share house chores, relatively lower status of daughter-in-law, and other cultural differences. They also answered that being forced to behave only in Korean ways, child rearing for example, is another stressor. They

narrated language problem to get often frustrated when they are not able to express their thoughts, face misunderstandings or conflicts, and have difficulties obtaining necessary information about daily life.

Economic stressor: The main theme verified from economic stressor is economic difficulties. The female marriage immigrants in Korea felt stressed out when they were in debt to a marriage broker and their husband was incompetent. In most of the cases, they had to support their original family. Economic difficulty was one of the stressors of the female marriage immigrants in Korea.

Social stressor: The main themes for social stressor are discrimination and social isolation. The female marriage immigrants in Korea felt that they were discriminated for being a foreigner and not accepted as a Korean though they thought they were. They felt lonely because they had no one, even their original family, around to consult with when they had a trouble. In some cases, their husbands or family was indifferent to them. They also pointed out that they were not getting enough support from the society; they were unable to find a counselor when they had with trouble or a job agency when they need to find a job.

Family stressor: Troubles with a husband and family-in-law were the family stressor of the female marriage immigrants in Korea. Conflict from distrust of each other, an authoritative attitude of a husband, and lies about the husband's economic or health conditions were commonly found. They were under stress when their family-in-law looked down on them or watched them to such a point that they were even banned from going outside.

Emotional stressor: The main theme for emotional stressor is a sense of anxiety; They were concerned over a case where they would be forced to leave Korea due to divorce or where they were hated by their children for their status.

Parenting stressor: The Female marriage immigrant in Korea answered that they have lots of difficulties in child rearing. They were worrying that their children would be discriminated because they are foreigner, and that they are not able to provide proper academic guidance to their children. They were also concerned that they would not be able to find information about child rearing and raise a child as good as other Korean parents.

Discussion

The result of this study shows that the female marriage immigrants in Korea were simultaneously going through stress from not only cultural differences and social discrimination, but also relationship with their family-in-law, economic difficulties, and child-rearing. It leads to a conclusion that a comprehensive management on stressors in family aspects as well as socio-cultural aspects should be considered when stress intervention programs are made.

<Refernce>

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Table 1. General Characteristics of Focus Group

Characteristics	Residence	Home Country	Age	Duration of residing in Korea	Date of Interview
Group 1	Rural area	China	39 years	3 years	October. 30, 2011
		China	37 years	2 years	
		China	28 years	2.3 years	
		Vietnam	28 years	5 years	
Group 2	Urban area	China	25 years	1 years	November. 2, 2011
		China	40 years	2.5 years	
		China	42 years	5 years	
		Vietnam	28 years	4 years	
Group 3	Urban area	Vietnam	27 years	3 years	November. 17, 2011
		Philippines	26 years	2 years	
		Philippines	36 years	5 years	
		Philippines	35 years	5 years	
		Philippines	37 years	9 years	

Table 2. Stressor of female marriage immigrants in Korea

Stressors	Main Themes	Contents
Cultural stressor	Culture difference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Differences in ways to share house chores . Lower status of daughter-in-law . Forcing the Korean child-rearing methods . Forcing the Korean ways
	Language barrier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Frustrating not to express their thoughts . Misunderstandings or conflicts because of not to communicate . Difficulties obtaining necessary information about daily life
Economic stressor	Economic difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Debt to a marriage broker . Husband's incompetent . Economic supporting their original family
Social stressor	Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Discriminating for being a foreigner . Not be accepting as a Korean
	Social isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Having no one around to consult . Indifference of husband or family . No agency to help them when they had a trouble or a job seeking
Household stressor	Problem with the husband	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Distrust of each other . Authoritative attitude of a husband . Lies about husband's economic or health conditions
	Problem with the family in law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Looking down on them . Banning from going outside
Emotional stressor	Feeling anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Being forced to leave Korea due to divorce . Worrying that their children hated mother
Parenting stressor	Parenting difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Worrying that their children would be discriminated because of half-breed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> . Not providing academic guidance to their children . Not finding information about child rearing . Not raising a child as good as other Korean parents