

Cultural Transition and Well-Being Experience of Immigrant Women Married to Korean Men in South Korea

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to help, maintain and improve the quality of life of immigrant women who are married to Korean men by identifying their experiences in the process of cultural transition. This study is qualitative research that applied ethnography research method through in-depth face-to-face interviews and participant observation. Data was collected from 8 married migrant women by means of the snow ball method. Data was divided into 9 domains, 27 categories, and 55 subcategories by theme. The themes are : 'Conjugalinity', 'Inconvenience in Communication', 'Conflict', 'Lack of Understanding', 'Cultural Difference', 'Worry', 'Effort', 'Desire', and 'Support'. It is necessary to develop nursing interventions through cultural nursing approaches for immigrant women who are married to Korean men so they can have healthier life and increase the quality of their well-being. Also more various and active nursing researches need to be conducted in the future.

Keywords: Immigration, Women, Cultural Transition, Well-being

1 Introduction

Korea has been rapidly transformed to multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic society because of the development of modern science technology and globalization. Recently, foreign population inflow from abroad has been increased through the continuing employment of foreign workers and international marriages. In particular, the international marriages between the Korean men who are in the socio-economically disadvantaged group in Korea and women from China, the philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Mongol have become very popular and it has been rapidly increased in number.

Those immigrant women experience great culture shocks from different socio-cultural background because they are already accustomed to their own language, food, custom, system, value, and life style. Without any basic knowledges of the Korean culture, those women get married through matchmaking which gives them only a few

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chance to meet each other before they get married. Then they go through the pregnancy and baby birth immediately with no time to adjust to the Korean culture so they are getting serious stress which can be very harmful for their well-being.

Moreover, the exclusivism which was resulted in the transition process to a multi-cultural society in Korea was accompanied with many social problems such as indifference, inhospitality, discrimination, exploitation, sexual abuse, physical violence etc. The Korean government has been trying to provide legal, institutional, and political supports in order to solve such problems by establishing social integration support countermeasures. However, in order to maintain and promote health and well-being of their life, it is important to increase our understanding about those immigrant women. It is necessary to identify what they go through in their cultural transition process in Korea.

Therefore, in this study, immigrant women's daily life experiences in their cultural transition process were studied through in-depth face-to-face interviews and participant observation in order to use the resulted data as a baseline data to develop nursing interventions which will help to increase their well-being.

2 Methods

This study is a qualitative research that used ethnography research method to identify cultural transition experiences of immigrant women who are married Korean men in Korea. A total of 8 convenience samples were selected as subjects by means of snow ball method. They are married to Korea men who have acquaintance with the researcher and can communicate in Korean. Data was collected from November 6 to 25 of 2012 which was after the research received the approval from H University IRB(Institutional Review Board : HYI-13-006). Data was collected through in-depth face-to-face interviews, participant observation, semi-structured questionnaires and audio-recorded interviews and the interviews were conducted two or three times per one person, 2 hours each. Convenience time and locations were selected for both informers and researchers beforehand and the audio was recorded with the prior written agreement. The data was analyzed as soon as it was collected according to Spradley's[1]method for contents analysis then, it was confirmed by 3 professors and 5 doctoral students of the nursing department who have qualitative research experiences.

3 Results

The things that they experienced in the transitional period in Korea were divided into 9 domains, 27 categories, and 55 subcategories. Those are: 'Conjugality', 'Inconvenience in Communication', 'Conflict', 'Lack of Understanding', 'Cultural Difference', 'Worry', 'Effort', 'Desire', and 'Support' (Table 1).

Table 1. Immigrant women face in the cultural transition in Korea cultural experience of life.

Domain	Category	Subcategory
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	Dating	Happiness of dating
Conjugality	Married through an introduction by an acquaintance	Get married
	Happy marriage	Lovely husband, Do not regret marriage
Inconvenience in Communication	Inconvenient to express	Lack of communication with children, Lack of expression due to the poor fluency of Korean
	Conflicts in language education	Confusion of language education, Conflicts due to language education interference
Conflict	Religion conflict	Religion reinforcement
	Conflict about children	Interference about child rearing from parents-in-law
	Lifestyle conflict	Difference in hygienic sense
Lack of understanding	Lack of understanding of husband	Lack of understanding about wife's culture, Lack of understanding about wife
	Stress related to husband	Husband's hot temper, Yelling husband, Husband nagging, physical symptoms related to the stress because of the husband
	Before and after childbirth culture	Eating well, Reading good books, listening to good music, eating sour food for morning sickness, Eating in a small bowl, Different food culture after childbirth
	Different culture	Different lifestyle, Inconvenience related to cultural difference, difference in expressing affection
Cultural difference	Positive Korean culture	Social, warmhearted Korean, The country of courteous people in the East
	Negative Korean culture	Lack of regard for others, Straightforward expression, patriarchal Korea men, holiday syndrome, Exclusion other culture, Oldest son chauvinism
	Culture of Korean woman	Hard working, Powerful Korean woman
Worry	Worries related to international conflicts	Tension between Korea and Japan
	Worries for the child's adaptation to Korea	Concern about child's outcast
Effort	Effort about adaptation of Korean culture	Learning Korean, Fitting to Korean culture, Treat sincerely
	Desire to learn Korean	Speaking Korean well
	Desire for self-development	Obtaining a certification, Going to a college
Desire	Desire for institutional improvement	Validation program for high school graduation
	Desire for socio-economic activities	Finding a job
	Desire for cultural understanding	Understanding culture of immigrant woman

	Desire for exchanges between immigrants	Sympathy
Support	Support from parents-in-law	Support for nurturing baby, Support for before and after the childbirth, regard parents-in-law
	Support from husband	Kind husband, Support for before childbirth care
	Support from sister-in-law	Sister-in-law's help

4 Discussion

Unlike former researches, this study includes an informer who dated and married to a Korean man through work places or friends. It is a different phenomenon from the past when they chose to come to Korea to help their family financially and overcome poverty through their marriage[2]. In other words, it suggests that change of Korean's cognition about marriage immigrant women is needed and we have to look at them not as objects of sympathy or miserable women but see it as a natural culture phenomenon[2]. According to this study, it is considered that parents-in-law and daughter-in-law conflict about the rearing and education of children in process of cultural transition experienced by marriage immigrant women are caused by parents-in-law who are difficult to accept daughter-in-law's culture[3] because parents-in-law are familiar with patriarchal and conservative traditional culture of Korea. However parents-in-law's consideration to relieve the burden of children rearing and educate inexperienced daughter-in-law can make them feel interfered. Marriage immigrant women are forced to be a Korean by assimilating with Korean culture rather than being understood for the conflicts coming from cultural differences so they have many physical and mental health problems because of their stress from cultural differences. Since marriage immigrant women's families or members of the community experience the cultural transition thus, the understanding and studies about them is also required[4]. Marriage immigrant women have negative experiences in transitional process to Korean culture however, they try to adjust to Korean culture so husband's as well as family's understanding and supports are very important in this process.

5 Conclusion

9 Domains deducted in result of this study have negative sides such as inconvenience in communication, conflict, lack of understanding, cultural difference, worry as well as the positive sides such as conjugality, support, effort and desire. Finally, it was found that they are finding steady life, experiencing the process of cultural transition into Korean culture. Therefore, not only active support in policy, institutional and legal sides for a multi-cultural family but also development of various programs for self-empowerment is needed. In addition, development of nursing intervention

through the cultural approach for healthier and well-being life of marriage immigrant women is needed and continuous studies are required in the future.

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