Awareness of Traditional Culture and National identity of Mother’s of Preschool Children

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Abstract. The purpose of this is to investigate the preferences of traditional culture and national identity of mothers of young children. Also, it aimed to compare their national identity and those of their young children. A total 217 mothers of preschool children participated in the study. Main results are as follows: First, mothers got slightly more than medium score on preferences of traditional culture and national identity. Second, national identity of mothers was different according to their jobs. Third, mother's preference of traditional culture was correlated with their national identity. Finally, maternal preferences of traditional culture were as correlated with their children's national identity.

Keywords: Awareness of Traditional Culture, National identity, Mother, Preschool Children

1 Introduction

In the industrial society, cultural tradition or national identity seems to be undervalued. However, as cultural competitiveness of a country affects its national influence, it is necessary to inherit and re-generate the traditional heritage instead of recklessly following western culture. In this sense, it is desirable to provide a proper environment at home to form national identity from early childhood.

Though significance of traditional cultural education is well described in the national kindergarten curriculum and standard child education curriculum, most studies on Korea’s traditional cultural education have dealt with the actual educational status of child care centers or teachers’ awareness (Mingyeong Goh, 2004; Hyeeun Suh, 2003; Sunjae Seong, 2008; Gyeongsu Lee, 2002; Gihyeon Lee, 2002; Eunhwideep Lee, et al., 2000) while only few of them focused on traditional cultural education at home or mothers’ awareness(Gyeonghua Jeon, Jeongwon Gang, 2004).

Preschool children seem to have emotional idea of stats such as a good country or bad country. They form national pride through national symbols and traditional
culture and subjectively understand and interpret the values and significance of traditional culture in building national identity (Gyeonhwa Jeon, 2002).

Some view that children are too young to develop the sense of identity on the national language and other symbols. Others consider that even pre-school children can understand some idea of state (Hangwon Kim, 1990) and any age group can be educated for the idea of state (Chanok Park, 1977). Mothers, as the first teacher, would have a lot of both direct and indirect effects on the children’s national identity establishment. It was found the more positive the mothers’ educational attitude to traditional culture, the more the children’s preference of traditional culture (Gyeonghwa Jeon, Jeongwon Gang, 2004). Therefore, to help children develop a meaningful and desired sense of identity, mothers need to have a proper view on the state in education their children. Nevertheless, study on mothers’ traditional cultural awareness has been very rare. The study by Gyeonghwa Jeon, et al. (2004) was the only previous study examining national identity of parents and children.

The present study seeks to provide the basic information for effective education of cultural heritage and national identity in connection with child education centers and homes by examining the characteristics of mother’s traditional culture preference and national identity and how it affect children’s national identity.

1. What is the general trend of mothers’ traditional culture preference and national identity and how does it differ according to demographic variables?
2. How is mothers’ traditional culture preference related to their national identity?
3. How is mothers’ traditional culture preference related to children’s national identity?

2 Research method

2.1 Research subject

In this study, 217 women were examined whose children were taken care of in 4 daycare centers in Gyeonggi-do, Korea. A total 250 sets of questionnaires distributed and 217 were analyzed. Of the children whose mothers’ surveys were collected back, 63 were interviewed one to one on national identity.

2.2 Research tool

2.2.1 Mothers’ preference for traditional culture
Ten question items of traditional culture preference of Gyeonghwa Jeon (2002) were utilized. The reliability Cronbach’s alpha was .86.

2.2.2 Mothers’ national identity
Of the tools by Hyunja Kim (2000) for 6th-graders, 20 questions were used including 6 questions on national loyalty, 6 on symbolic awareness and 8 on national
pride while excluding those on national re-unification and future vision. Cronbach alpha was .81.

2.2.3 Children’s national identity

Of the tools by Gyeonghwa Jeon (2002), 5 questions on national symbols and 10 questions on traditional were used herein. For each question, the children were interviewed one to one to find out their awareness level, preference and reason for preference. Cronbach’s alpha was from 87 to .92.

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Five mothers not included in this research were preliminarily surveyed in advance. Then questions were modified accordingly and tested for validity by three experts with ECE doctorate. The children were interviewed one to one with the researcher in an empty classroom during free activity time at the care center. The collected data were analyzed with SPSS Win Program for statistics including means, standard deviation, etc. as well as Pearson correlation and ANOVA followed by Duncan test.

3 Research findings and interpretation

3.1 Mothers’ preference for traditional culture and national identity

3.1.1 General tendency of mothers’ traditional culture preference and national identity

Mothers’ preference for traditional culture was 3.22, slightly higher than the medium. In terms of sub-factors, the preference for traditional drinks was the highest (M=3.64) followed by preference for genre painting (M=3.40) while recording lower in preference for traditional accessories (M=2.74) and traditional costume (M=2.55).

Table 1. Mean of the preference of traditional culture (N=217)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional costume</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional cake</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional music</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional accessary</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional mask</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional house</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean traditional drawing</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mothers’ national identity was 3.73 on average, a little bit higher than the normal level. As for sub-factors, national pride recorded the highest (M=3.79) followed by national loyalty (M=3.77) and symbolic awareness (M=2.74).

Table 2. Mean of the preference of national identity (N=217)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>patriotism</th>
<th>awareness for the national symbol</th>
<th>ethnic pride</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.2 Mothers’ traditional culture preference and national identity according to demographic variables

As a result of ANOVA, mothers’ traditional culture preference showed no significant difference according to children’s gender and age; mother’s age; and average monthly family income. It showed significant difference solely according to mothers’ employment status. Employed mothers’ traditional culture preference was at 3.31, higher than that of non-employed mothers with 3.11. (F=5.70, p<.05).

Table 3. One-way ANOVA of mothers’ preference of traditional culture and national identity (N=112)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>education</th>
<th>preference of traditional culture M(SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>national identity M(SD)</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>high school or below(102)</td>
<td>3.12(.54)</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.61(.39)a</td>
<td>8.21***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college(59)</td>
<td>3.29(.62)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.90(.53)b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>university or above(56)</td>
<td>3.30(.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.76(.48)ab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>employed(118)</td>
<td>3.31(.64)</td>
<td>5.70*</td>
<td>3.81(.50)</td>
<td>6.89**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-employed(99)</td>
<td>3.11(.59)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.64(.42)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mothers’ national identity was found to have significant differences according to their academic backgrounds and employment status. To look into more details, national identity recorded the highest in the group of mothers with 2-year college graduation background or higher (M=3.90) followed by the group with university graduation background or higher (M=3.76). The group with high school graduation or under (M=3.61) recorded the lowest.(F=8.21, p<.001). Also the employed mothers
averaged 3.81 for national identity level, higher than 3.64 of non-employed mothers. (F=6.89, p<.01).

3.2 Relationship between mothers’ traditional culture preference and their national identity

As a result of Pearson correlation analysis, mothers’ preference for traditional culture showed no significant relationship with their national identity, loyalty and symbolic awareness but a positive correlation (r=.294, p<.05) with national pride (r=.331).

**Table 4.** Correlation of mothers’ preference of traditional culture and national identity (N=63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>preference of traditional culture</th>
<th>national identity</th>
<th>patriotism</th>
<th>awareness for the national symbol</th>
<th>ethnic pride</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.188</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>.331**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Relationship between mothers’ traditional culture preference and children’s national identity

Mothers’ preference for traditional culture had no significant relationship with children’s traditional culture awareness but it had a positive correlation (r=.294, p<.05) with children’s symbolic awareness preference.

**Table 5** Correlation of mothers’ preference of traditional culture and their children’s national identity (N=63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>children's national identity</th>
<th>national symbol</th>
<th>traditional culture</th>
<th>reason for preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>awareness</td>
<td>preference</td>
<td>reason for preference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mother’s preference of traditional culture</td>
<td>-.006</td>
<td>.294*</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Discussion and conclusion

Based on the main findings in this research, the following discussion can be made.

First, mothers showed a slightly higher level of traditional culture preference but wide gaps between each item. Preference for traditional drinks was the highest of all whereas preference for traditional costume or accessories was the lowest. It seems that the preference for traditional drinks topped the list because they had lots of
opportunities to access such drinks as shikhye or sujeonggwa as processed food or through vending machines. In the research by In, et al. (2012) investigating university students, the participants were found to view traditional tea as a kind of everyday drink. As such, availability is also deemed to have an effect. In this sense, it is necessary to conduct promotion and education more proactively on traditional culture including traditional beverages in order to elevate people’s awareness on traditional culture and provide more opportunities for children to taste traditional drinks or food not only at home but also in child education organizations.

On the other hand, the preference levels for traditional costume and accessories were far lower than those in other items. It seems because the participants were reluctant to wear the traditional costume as they have to wear several layers of dresses and thought the costume was not the latest fashion. As for traditional accessories, people did not have many opportunities to see them in their daily life, such accessories are too difficult to use every day and used only together with the traditional costume or just for interior decoration. To improve the preference for traditional costume and accessories, the excellence of Korean traditional culture should be further notified for people’s understanding and awareness amid plenty of access to traditional costume culture.

Mothers’ national identity was slightly higher than medium score. Especially stronger items were the national pride (pride on national history and cultural heritage) and loyalty (awareness, pride and confidence in national flag, country and national territory). Symbolic awareness got the lower score (significance of national holidays and attitude and pride toward country, national flag and flower). These indicate that the mothers herein felt proud and rewarding for the country and people while being ignorant of national holidays, national flag and flower and regarding national holidays just another day-off for leisure activities. This should be considered in developing a national identity program.

Regarding the traditional culture preference and national identity, mothers with a job showed higher levels than those without. Mothers having 2-year college graduation background or higher, their awareness on national identity was higher. Mothers having high school graduation background were found to have lower national identity. This is similar to the research result by Gyeonghwa Jeon, et al (2004) that the higher the educational background of parents, the stronger the awareness of their national identity. It is deemed that more educated mothers, compared with those with high-school background, could have more opportunities to learn about national identity to build a stronger viewpoint in this regard. Those with jobs or higher academic background showed higher national identity or awareness and preference for traditional culture indicates that school or occupational experience has a positive effect on building national pride or cultural awareness.

Second, the higher the mothers’ preference for traditional culture, the stronger the national pride that represents the pride on national history and cultural heritage. This is consistent with the research finding by Gyeongsun Lee 92002) that 4th-grade experienced higher interest in national culture after learning a traditional culture program. In this sense, it is necessary to offer a favorable daily environment for traditional culture first in order to improve mothers and the whole national people’s pride on Korean history and cultural heritage.
Third, the stronger the mothers’ traditional culture preference, the more positive their children’s attitude to the significance of national holidays, national anthem, flag and flower along with higher pride and preference. This is deemed because mothers’ high interest and understanding in traditional culture had a positive effect on their children’s attitude to the state just as parents’ attitude and view on values are reportedly passed on to their children through an identification process consistently with the research finding by Hyunja Kim (200) that attitude to the state, etc. were largely determined by people’s childhood experiences at home. Therefore, their mothers’ interest in and awareness of necessity of traditional culture should be significantly researched and educated.

Based on the findings above, several suggestions are made for follow-up research. First, future study is expected to include the diverse areas. Second, homes or educational organizations will need to develop a traditional cultural education program in connection with teachers or homes and test its effectiveness empirically in future study.

References

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