Life experience of Korean men who married immigrant women in Korea

Eun Sil Jung, Eun Kwang Yoo, Hye Jin Kim

1 Assistant professor, Department of Nursing, Kyungbok University,
  2 Professor, Department of Nursing, Hanyang University
  3 Professor, Department of Nursing, Kyungbok University
  *Corresponding Author: Eun Kwang Yoo

E-mail: jes0325@hanmail.net

Abstract. This is a qualitative research that explores the potential problems and difficulties of Korean men who married foreign immigrant women. It examines the husbands’ life changes through their international marriage, thereby attempting to provide basic data for development of marriage counseling programs to help establish an ideal role of healthy-minded husbands of multicultural families. The participants were 7 Korean men who married immigrant women, and data were collected from April 3rd, 2013 to June 3rd, 2013, using focus group interview. As a result, there were four major themes observed: “The process of becoming One”, “Cultural differences that are too different”, “Stress and scars caused by wives”, and “husbands and wives becoming more alike”. The study has found out that the husbands experience tremendous amount of stress and difficulties due to complicated process of international marriage as well as cultural differences, especially during the earlier phases of marriage. Therefore, this study will help establish the ideal role of Korean husbands and strengthen the family bond and provide basic data for developing more adequate marriage counseling programs. Furthermore, it will help multicultural families to be well integrated into Korean society. (70-150 단어)

Keywords: Korean men, immigrant women, life experience, Focus group interview

1 Introduction

Most of the international marriages in Korea were between socially underprivileged Korean men and immigrant women from underdeveloped countries. This was caused by the fact that after the mid-1990s, too many unmarried men in the countryside became recognized as a social problem, and as a result, having them marry foreign immigrant women became one of the solutions and was supported by local governments [1]. As the foreign immigrant women start their new life in Korea through their marriage, they confront many problems caused by cultural differences as they try to get used to living in the completely different culture. Some of the factors
that make their life more difficult are Korean men’s stubbornly patriarchal view on their gender role [2] and their ignorance to their wives’ culture [3]. Most of the previous studies focused on the lives of the foreign immigrant women, but studies that deal with their Korean husbands’ lives are almost nonexistent.

Therefore, this study was conducted in order to find out some of the potential problems and difficulties of Korean men who married foreign immigrant women. It examined the husbands’ life changes through their international marriage, thereby attempting to provide basic data for the development of marriage counseling programs to help establish an ideal role of healthy-minded husbands of multi-cultural families.

2 Method

2.1 Research Outline

This was a qualitative study utilizing in-depth focus group interview. The interview, based on semi-structured questionnaires, was conducted in order to explore the lives of Korean men who married immigrant women. The interviews were conducted both before and after their wedding in the sociocultural and environmental context of Korea.

2.2 Participants

The participants were 7 Korean men who married immigrant women in Korea, who agreed to participate in this study.

2.3 Data Collection Method and Ethical Consideration

The participants were 7 Korean men who married immigrant women in Korea that agreed to participate in this study. Data was collected from April 3, 2013 to June 3, 2013 using in-depth focus group interviews, asking “What do Korean husbands of multicultural families experience daily?” One session lasted from 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours, and quiet cafes were chosen as interview places. The interviews were recorded upon the participants’ agreement with the guarantee of their anonymity.

2.4 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed through an ongoing process according to Spradley's method of content analysis and was confirmed by two professors from the department of nursing with previous experience of qualitative research and also by one of the participants.
3 Results

3.1 General Characteristics of the Participants

The average age of the participants was 46.3 where 6 were in their 40s and one was in his 50s. 5 of the husbands’ wives were from the Philippines, one from Vietnam and one from China. The average duration of their marriages was 7.7 years.

3.2 Korean’s Men’s Experiences

There were four major themes observed: “The process of becoming One”, “Cultural differences that are too different”, “Stress and scars caused by wives”, and “Husbands and wives becoming more alike”.

1) The process of becoming One; includes ‘the third marriage meeting with a person who already rejected me twice’, ‘Deciding to marry someone after only looking at the photo’, ‘Getting married to make parents happy’

2) Cultural differences that are too different; includes ‘arguing and getting scarred as a result of inability to communicate’, ‘getting frustrated with each other’s different lifestyles’, ‘Forcing their wives to follow Korean culture’.

3) Stress and scars caused by wives; includes ‘getting hurt because of their wives’ stubborn attitude to stick with their own culture’, ‘wives frustrating husbands by trying to win every argument’, ‘Getting stressed because of wasteful wife’, ‘regretting getting married because the parents aren’t pleased with the marriage’

4) Husbands and wives becoming more alike; includes ‘giving financial support to their wives’ family’, ‘making Korean names for their wives’, ‘visiting their wife’s country’, ‘participating in multicultural family support campaign’, ‘studying hard to be on the same page with their wives’

4 Conclusions

This study confirmed that many Korean men who marry foreign immigrant women experience a lot of stress and go through many difficulties due to cultural differences and the language barrier, especially during the early phase of the marriage. It showed that both husbands and wives go through many conflicts and end up stressing and hurting each other.

One thing to note was the fact that many Korean men’s under preparedness of their marriage manifested as a failure to grasp reality [4]. Also, their stubbornly patriarchal mentality and the wives’ stubborn attitude exacerbated their marriage problems.

This study will help establish the ideal role of Korean husbands and strengthen the family bond and provide basic data for developing more adequate marriage
counseling programs. Furthermore, it will help multi-cultural families to be well integrated into Korean society.

Reference