

The Experiences of Mothers-In-Law Living With an Immigrant Daughter-In-Law in South Korea

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Abstract

As the growth of international marriages increased, this thematic analysis study focused on mothers-in-law in multicultural families in South Korea. This study explored mothers-in-law's experiences of living with an immigrant daughter-in-law in multicultural families in South Korea. This study used thematic analysis of qualitative methods, included 10 mothers-in-law selected from rural areas. The participants' attitudes toward the marriage of their son were divided into three stages; "the early stage," "acceptance of the international marriage," and "life at present." These three stages comprised 5 themes and 14 sub-items. Mothers-in-law living with an immigrant daughter-in-law had many physical illnesses, psychological problems, and they felt guilty or that they had sinned. However, they had no support system. Participants of this study wanted to receive social support and sincere human relationship. In practice, the Korean society needs to change its perception and develop positive attitudes toward multicultural marriages.

Keywords: Experience, mother-in-law, immigrant woman, daughter-in-law, qualitative.

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INTRODUCTION

The number of international marriages in East Asian countries has gradually increased every year. Among them, the number of international marriages in Korea has exhibited a more dramatic growth than that in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore [1]. The growth of international marriages has eroded the once-solid myth of South Korea's homogeneity [2] and has led to an increased interest in multiculturalism in Korea.

An examination of Korea's marriage pattern since the 1990s, the number of marriages with Chinese immigrants (Korean-Chinese) was the highest. The number of marriages between Chinese women and Korean men grew to a cumulative 37,171 by the end 1999, and the figure almost doubled again to 70,163 by 2005 [2]. However, recently, marriages with immigrant women from other Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Mongolia, and Thailand, have increased substantially [2, 3]. The number of migrant women is six times higher than the number of migrant men [3], and the percentage of international marriages in men from the middle and lower social strata living in rural areas was higher than that of those living in urban areas [4]. As a social phenomenon, this increase in marriages with migrant women in rural areas may be

explained by the increase in get married late [4, 5] due to the imbalance in the sex ratio, the higher educational status of women, and the increase in women's economic activities [2]. Though 41% of rural males are married, international marriages have been one of the main streams [5]. However, studies pertaining to international marriages in Southeast Asian countries mainly pertain to immigrant women's mental and physical health [5-7], and intervention studies for promoting their mental and physical health have been performed [7, 8]. The many studies related to international marriages that the proportion of migrant women was relatively high can interpret as a positive phenomenon for those who need to adapt to the new environment and culture. However, due to the realistic difficulties faced by multicultural families, a multi-faceted examination of the concerns of foreign women and their family members is required [9].

Interaction between mothers- and daughters-in-law tends to be more intensive and role-bound than that between a man and his wife's parents [10]. Across culture and historical eras, the relationship between mothers- and daughters-in-law has been characterized by tension and power struggles [11, 12]. In particular, in Southeast Asian countries in which the conflict between mothers-and daughters-in-law is severe, several studies

have actively explored this relationship [13-15]. Many studies on the conflict between mothers- and daughters-in-law conducted in the United States have mainly focused on East Asian immigrants including China, Korea, and Taiwan [11, 16-18].

Especially, people living in rural areas where the percentage of international marriages is high, have a deeper relationship with their neighbors than those living in cities do. As they collaborate for their farm business and housework, they tend to spend the whole day with each other [5]. Further, due to the characteristics of the elderly; it would not be easy for the elderly living in rural areas to adapt to an immigrant daughter-in-law with reference to the views of neighbors and the familiarity with old customs. Multicultural studies have mainly focused on immigrant daughters-in-law in Confucian countries because they recognized as a relatively weaker section of the society [11]. However, international marriages have an influence on the mental and physical health of mothers-in-law as well as daughters-in-law [19].

South Korea takes pride in its homogeneous nature. Therefore, it does not naturally accept an international marriage and has a high negative prejudice against mixed marriages [2]. In particular, people living in rural areas were strongly affected by the ideals of the Confucian culture such as filial piety and reverence to older members of the family [10]. Further, the incidence of extended family is higher in rural areas than that in the city. While many studies have examined the conflict between mothers- and daughters-in-law in regular families in Confucian countries [20, 21], the studies on multicultural households have tended to focus on the perspectives of the immigrant daughter-in-law [6, 9]. However, mothers-in-law also experience stress pertaining to accepting the culture and language change brought about by an immigrant daughter-in-law, and it is difficult for the rural elderly to accept an immigrant daughter-in-law in the position of the rural elderly [5, 22]. The Korean rural elderly, who have a strong belief and pride on the Confucian culture and on the concept of a homogeneous country, experience substantial acculturation stress in the process of accepting an immigrant daughter-in-law [5, 9].

The stress levels of mothers-in-law in multicultural families is higher than that of general elderly women, which has an impact on their somatization⁹ and leads to several problems such as those pertaining to communication, interpersonal relationships, and stress [5]. The quality of the relationship between a mother- and daughter-in-law was related to women's well-being and depression [23]. The elderly is usually more vulnerable to stress and physical health issues than young people are. However, there is a scarcity of studies on mothers-in-law who face the dual stress of the relationship with their daughter-in-law and of an international marriage.

Thus, this study focused on mothers-in-law in multicultural families. As mothers-in-law facing such difficult times do not accept changes, this study intended to explore the stressful situations that occur in the process of accepting and adapting to a daughter-in-law from another country and to examine the related issues.

METHOD

This study used a thematic analysis of qualitative methods, which provides a highly flexible approach, identifying, and analyzing patterns in qualitative data [24]. The use of thematic analysis was particularly appreciating for analyzing narrative materials of life stories [25]. In addition, this method is best suited to search and identification of common threads that extend across an interview or a set of interviews [26]. Frequently nursing researchers use this method [25]. Thus, this method offered an opportunity for mothers-in-law to share their life stories that is experiences to enrich the understanding of living with an immigrant daughter-in-law.

Participants

In this study, participants were recruited through snowball sampling with the help of an immigrant center in a rural region and a home visit nurse for immigrant women. Participants of this study were selected using the following criteria to examine their experiences in living with an immigrant daughter-in-law: living with her son and immigrant daughter-in-law, agreeing to participate, providing written informed consent, being able to communicate with someone, and express her own experiences in this study.

After explaining the purpose of this study, 10 women agreed to participate. Out of the 10 participants, one was in her 80s, two were in their 70s, six were in their 60s, and one was in her 50s. The following was the nationality of the immigrant daughter-in-law of the participants: three each were from China, the Philippines, and Viet- Nam; and one was from Mongolia. In terms of age of the daughter-in-law, six were in their 20s, and four were in their 30s. The ages of son's, eight were in their 40s, and two were in their 30s. With reference to duration of cohabitation with the daughter-in-law, one participant had spent less than one year; three had done so for two to five years; and two each had spent five, five to seven years, and more than 10 years with their daughter-in-law, respectively. Further, eight of the participants lived with members belonging to three generations, while two of them lived with two generations.

Data Collection

In order to prevent preconceptions and bias about participants' experiences, this study used to apply bracketing that is writing memos throughout all research progress; data collection, analysis as a means

of examining and reflecting upon' the researcher's engagement with the data [27]. Because many nursing scholars suggested bracketing in nursing qualitative research [28], the researchers worked on bracketing all process.

In-depth interviews periods conducted from February to June 2016. Each participant interviewed two to three times. The data comprised the in-depth interviews and field notes. All interviews were audiotaped and were transcribed by the researchers. Each interview took from 90 minutes to 150 minutes. The date and place of interview was set by considering the convenience of the participants. Sometimes, based on the participants' request, interviews were conducted on a park bench, during a quiet time zone. When parts that participants referred to in the interview process were unclear, they were clarified using confirmation questions to verify reliability of the content. After the interview, field notes were used to record information such as participant attitudes and distinctive behaviors, the information that needed further clarification, and so on. In addition to interviews, observations were performed and memos were written down, which were then utilized in the analysis. The participants' responses, attitudes, and behaviors were observed and wrote down his or her personal experiences and feelings in the field notes.

Ethical Considerations

Participants and their son and daughter-in-law permitted these researchers to perform this study. Furthermore, participants were provided a detailed description of the study purposes and procedures, and were informed about the use of a voice recorder, after which they provided their written agreement and consent. The researchers also promised to use the interview data solely for the purpose of the present study, and informed the participants that all the data such as the recordings and transcripts must discard after completion of the study. The researchers were informed that their participation was anonymous and that they could withdraw from the study any time they wished. Participants were also informed about their rights and the advantages or disadvantages of participating in the study.

Data Analysis

This study was applied the thematic analysis method of 6 phase recommended by Braun and Clarke [24]. This study has attempted to establish trustworthiness criteria by Lincoln & Guba [29] during each phase of thematic analysis.

In the first phase to improving trustworthiness of data, stored raw data in well-organized archives, kept records of all data field notes, and transcripts. We became immersed in the data by transcribing the interviews, repeatedly listening to the audio and video

files, and reading the transcripts. Recorded interview data were transcribed verbatim.

In the second phase of generating initial codes, we systematically coded interesting features of the data, and reviewed, checked, and defined themes in the coded extracts.

In the third phase of searching for themes, a title was assigned to each theme and similar themes were categorized. Subsequently, we attempted to achieve data saturation.

In the fourth phase of reviewing themes, after identifying the main theme and the sub-themes, a thematic map was generated. We tested for referential adequacy by returning to raw data.

In the fifth phase of defining and naming themes, we identified consensus on themes through peer debriefing. We worked documentation of theme naming.

In the last phase, to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of this analysis, we asked participants to comment on the summary of the interviews. Participants examined the initial analysis and reported their comments or opinions to the authors. Subsequently, two nursing professors with a rich experience in qualitative research examined and revised the analysis. These authors concentrated on the extracted themes and chose vivid quotes that captured the key points of the participants' lived experiences.

RESULTS

The following five themes emerged from the data analysis: (i) Theme 1 and 2 pertained to the early stages of the son's marriage, (ii) Theme 3 was related to the acceptance of the son's international marriage, and (iii) Theme 4 and 5 were related to their present life. These five themes comprised 14 sub-themes in total.

Difficulties in Accepting: The Early Stage

Participants experienced difficulties immediately after the international marriage. As an international marriage was an object of social bias, they thought that, because of their own sins, their sons married a foreign national. Therefore, participants experienced a sense of guilt. Since all the participants lived in a rural area, they had to endure the uncomfortable perceptions of the villagers. They could no longer remain in contact with people around them due to baseless rumors and making fun of them.

My Misfortune

Most participants attributed their son's marriage problems to their own sin. Some participants' son was born with disabilities. Therefore, the negative thought of her son was suffering owing to her sins and

married an immigrant due to the same was connected with a sense of guilt. They had a difficult time during the early stage of their son's marriage owing to the sense of guilt pertaining to their son's late marriage, congenital disability, and international marriage. Participants had a very low self-esteem and felt responsible for their son's marriage.

If I were fortunate enough, I would have a good daughter-in-law. But because I have committed many sins, I don't have the fortune of having a good husband or a good son. It is no use cursing heaven. It is my sin with a disabled son. (Participant 3)

I'm tearing my heart and pouring tears. It is my fate. This misfortune is also my fate. Where can poor people like me be? It is because I have committed many sins. (Participant 8)

My son has deafness. In the past, I tried to find my son's Korean daughter-in-law from a disabled school or centers, but I did not receive any help from anyone. All Korean women refused my son. My daughter-in-law came from far away. I thank her for living with us and I am sorry for her. But it is my sin and my destiny, I am not fortunate enough. So I could not avoid this misfortune. As my son is incompetent, such a result was expected. I am unhappy since I was born. (Participant 4)

Neighbors' Gossips

Participants fought against their sense of guilt, but they had to tackle also with rumors and negative views of neighbors and relatives. Despite an increase in the proportion of international marriages, neighbors have negative attitudes toward immigrant daughters-in-law. Most of the participants had no contact with their relatives during the early stage of their son's marriage, or were secluded from their neighbors.

Our neighbors said, "You are world family" make fun of me. My older sister said, "If you have more children, all they will do international marriage. It seems good that you can travel all over the world." She laughs at me. I felt so bad. (Participant 4)

I want to keep the marriage concealed even from my family, brother or sisters. I also hate to stay in contact with neighbors and relatives. Who on earth knows why my mind is like this? (Participant 7)

None of my neighbors talks to me. They are spreading exaggerated stories about my household. Strange rumors are being created. So there is nobody to talk to. (Participant 9)

Complaints Regarding the Immigrant Daughter-In-Law: The Early Stage

After their son's international marriage, the disadvantages of having an immigrant daughter-in-law

became evident to the mothers-in-law, and conflict situations began to appear. While participants who lived with their son hated their immigrant daughter-in-law, they began experiencing negative emotions rather than understanding the daughter-in-law. Rather than trying to understand the daughter-in-law's verbal communication and cultural differences, the participants expected her to honor them. However, as the culture of an immigrant daughter-in-law differed from that of South Korea, she has no respect to elder participants. Because of the difficulties in verbal communication, while they did not know how to solve conflicts between them, they endured through the early stage of their son's marriage.

Only can be seen Disadvantages

While living with an immigrant daughter-in-law, the participants began to see her negative characteristics or disadvantages. Some participants generalized and analyzed the disadvantages of their immigrant daughter-in-law as if they were the shortcomings of her ethnicity.

She doesn't wash very often and her nature is not good. I think of a foreign daughter-in-law as a daughter and put up with many things. (Participant 3)

She is lazy. People of her country are originally lazy. Her mother is also lazy. Why on earth do they get up so late in the morning? I'm wake up earlier than she does. (Participant 9)

Some participants also confessed their feeling about the disadvantages of having an immigrant daughter-in-law as compared to a Korean woman.

If Korean daughter-in-law lived with the elderly, they get up in the morning and prepare breakfast. In addition, although Korean daughter-in-law feels hurt, she endures it. We Korean people are originally diligent. Foreign daughters-in-law look diligent, but she moves slowly and lazy. (Participant 1)

Cooking My Own Meals

Because of the differences in the food culture, some participants could not eat the meals with their family. Although these participants were very old, had a variety of diseases, and lived with their son, they cooked their own food. In the Korean society, a daughter-in-law generally serves food to the extended family. However, some participants expressed that they lived a different life as compared to the regular Korean family.

I cook a side dish myself and eat it. I cannot eat the food served by my foreign daughter-in-law. She cooks one side dish for her children are another one for us. What on earth do I say? Her character is not good. So I won't talk about it. (Participant 7)

Her elder sister lives in our village. That family is also multicultural family. My

daughter-in-law brings her elder sister's children to our home, cooks their food, and they eat it among themselves. But she did not cook for me. I observe this very often and I am always angry. Our country emphasize that older people always respect anytime, anywhere. She and elder sister are very rude. (Participant 6)

Solving Conflicts by Enduring the Problems

Participants had conflicts due to many problems such as food, laziness of the daughter-in-law, and so on, but they did not talk about it and continued to live together. Most of the participants considered enduring without expressing one are feeling as a solution to solve the problems. In addition, they decided to endure because difficulties of language. Participants did not receive help from others to solve their problems.

Let her go away. It's ok if I put up with it a little. If I constantly nagged at my daughter-in-law, I would have a bad relationship and I suppose the disease in my body. If I can tolerate it, I can endure it as much as possible and never talk about it. (Participant 1)

I don't communicate with her, so I'm lonely. It is hard to tolerate it and it is no use saying anything. The patience is the best. My foreign daughter-in-law does not read and write the letters by Korean, it is no use complaining (Participant 3)

Considering the Immigrant Daughter-in-law as a Korean Daughter-in-law: The Acceptance Stage

While participants crossed their son's honeymoon period, they invested substantial efforts to accept their immigrant daughter-in-law. They changed their negative thoughts to positive ones and tried to view the immigrant daughter-in-law as a family member. They realized that, until then, they had only focused on their daughter-in-law's drawbacks, but on focusing on positive thoughts, they felt sorry and compassionate. In addition, they transformed their neighbors' negative attitudes toward their immigrant daughter-in-law into positive ones, and improved their interpersonal relationships.

Comforting Myself

Participants tried teach their immigrant daughter-in-law about Korean cultures. They compared their immigrant daughter-in-law with Korean daughters-in-law and complained about the social deterioration of the filial piety culture.

Korean daughters-in-law look up to their mother-in-law but my daughter-in-law talks down to me. It is natural that they are in the habit of talking roughly in their country. When we both usually talk, neighbors think that we are quarreling. However, my daughter-in-law is better than a bad Korean woman. (Participant 10)

Is a Korean daughter-in-law likely to cook meals? I don't think so. Every daughter-in-law doesn't kind to a mother-in-law. (Participant 4)

Teaching My Daughter-in-law about the Korean Culture

Participants realized that they could not waste their time blaming the drawbacks of their daughter-in-law. While teaching a daughter-in-law about Korean foods and about the culture, they actively tried to change their own view of the immigrant daughter-in-law. Some participants helped their daughter-in-law learn Korean and they themselves tried to overcome the difficulties in communicating with her. By teaching them about the family culture, they helped the daughter-in-law settle in Korea.

My daughter-in-law should first know about our culture and our family traditions. I am teaching her why a family and husband are very important. I did not buy foods from my daughter-in-law's country, never. Because you live here with us, you should eat our foods. It is hard for us to go to a foreign country at first, but after ten days, it is not bad to stay there. I said to her, "Eat Korean foods because you are going to continue to live in Korea." (Participant 4)

My daughter-in-law learned Korean but she didn't listen to me completely. It is better for her to learn Korean because she is young. I cannot learn a foreign language because I am old. She should live here in Korea continuously. (Participant 1)

Considering the Immigrant Daughter-in-law as My Daughter

As participants accepted their immigrant daughter-in-law, they began having humane interchanges. Moreover, they regarded her as a daughter. They even felt pity and sad regarding their daughter-in-law's condition and developed an intimate relationship with her. As the participants taught their daughter-in-law about their customs and communicated with each other, they felt affectionate and began to accept her.

My daughter-in-law has come from another country and is living with us. There is no use nagging to her constantly. I think of her as my youngest daughter. (Participant 1)

To live with husband, she came from her country to South Korea. So I said to her, "You think of me as your mother." I too consider her as my daughter. (Participant 4)

I thought my married daughter whenever I see daughter-in-law. I do not think her as my daughter-in-law. She looks poor, so I try to give her things generously, as I would to my daughter. (Participant 9)

Improvement in the Reputation among Neighbors

As the life of the participants and their daughters-in-law improved, the neighbors' perceptions improved. The solution of conflict and education, which were preceded by the acceptance of an immigrant daughter-in-law, had a positive influence on the neighbors.

At first, I threw away all the foods that my foreign daughter-in-law had cooked. As most of the foods were fatty, I could hardly eat them. So I fed it to dogs. Since then, my daughter-in-law has made efforts to cook well, so she cooks as others would. She has learnt to cook Kimchi (Korea traditional food) well. She has participated in a Foreign Kimchi Festival and has won an award. (Participant 8)

She does the laundry. She completes her own work and then does my work as well. She does the work very well, and is famous for it around here. The neighbors are very envious of me. (Participant 5)

A participant who has an active characteristic has an immigrant daughter-in-law who has an active one as well. This participant went to the television networks due to an active personality of the daughter-in-law and boasted about the advantages of multicultural families.

The neighborhood knew about what my daughter-in-law does well. I went out well for the station. While I had never been to the broadcasting station, I was interviewed twice and went out of the radio station as well. (Participant 10)

However, the Remaining Tasks: Life at Present

This theme was composed of the problems that remained after the participants accepted their immigrant daughter-in-law. Many difficulties that arose owing to the international marriage led the participants to experience mental and physical hurt. Though the older participants were very ill, they did not wish to rely on their son or his wife. The disease state of the participants became serious. After accepting son's marriage, they not relieved anxiety and depression about their life.

Developing Hwa-Byung

Hwa-Byung is a culture-bound syndrome specific to Korea. It is a unique diagnosis and differs from other DSM disorders (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) [17]. The word Hwa-Byung represents an "anger syndrome" or "fire illness" [30]. In Korean, "hwa" means "fire" or "anger" and "byung" means "illness" [31]. Hwa-Byung worsens when one cannot express anger or experiences a sense of guilt. Though their married son led a comfortable life, most participants reported similar symptoms. However, no one received professional treatment for Hwa-Byung.

My heart beats violently and I get upset. Who knows (maybe it is) Hwa-Byung? (Participant 3)

Sometimes, my heart pounds vigorously. So I drink a cup of water. Nobody understands me. Does the heaven know about my feelings? Or does the earth know? I think so, and I just stand and stand. I live like every day. (Participant 9)

Even now, I feel like something is coming out of my chest, my eyes get red, cold sweat flows all over my body, and I cannot sleep every day. Most of all, the most frustrating thing is that there is no person to talk to. (Participant 7)

Fear That the Daughter-in-law May Run Away

Though the immigrant daughter-in-law lived a stable life, participants feared that she might run away. Even those who were ill lived an uneasy retired life because of this fear. Therefore, if the daughter-in-law went out, they felt anxious. They feared that after marrying with great difficulty, their son might be left alone again.

I doubted if a foreign daughter-in-law would remain for a long time, although she would live with her son without fleeing. My sense of anxiety increases with time; I am uneasy and my heart is beating so hard. I can't sleep. Even when my daughter-in-law goes out for a while, I am worried about what may have happened to her. Above all, the biggest worry is what if she goes away. (Participant 2)

Honestly, I am always nervous. If I die right away, I am always worried that she is likely to go away and leave my son alone. I always do my best for her. I feel anxious the whole time when she goes out. Though I try to trust her, as I always think like this.

She seems to endure here owing to her children, and I can't know what is on her mind because she is very young. (Participant 8)

A participant said that her son married twice, but when he married an immigrant the first time, she ran away. This participant had a higher sense of anxiety as compared to the other participants.

The first my foreign daughter-in-law ran away from her husband in just 40 days. At first, I guessed that a man who introduced her to my son took her away. But this was not true. She sat on the chair and then played games on the computer the whole time. But that was not game, she communicated (chatting in community site on the computer) with a foreigner for a while. Eventually, she ran away. I always feel anxiety about run away of second my daughter-in-law. This is very sad reality. (Participant 9)

Tears that Never Dry

Although one participant reported that she had managed to make her disabled son marry so that he would lead a stable life, she continued to tear up throughout her interview. Some participants cried a lot during the interview. In such cases, the researcher stopped the interview for a while and then continued.

(tearing) I'm very old like this. So I want not to cry. but I'm not holding back my tears. (Participant 8)

Tears keep flowing without reason. Though my I have crossed the time when tears would have dried, they continue to flow all day long. (Participant 7)

I don't know why tears don't dry like this. What kind of crime did I commit in the past? (Participant 2)

Marriage is a happy event in which the couple is to be blessed by everyone. However, the participants' tears revealed their psychological pain because they felt sad memory on son's marriage process in the past. Additionally, the participants could not express their psychological pains, which became evident from their tears.

Confiding in Someone for the First Time: Life at Present

Participants confessed that they had expressed their own stories to another person for the first time. They said that they appreciated people who were concerned with their difficulties and listened to their voices sincerely.

Missing People

Participants suffered from Hwa-Byung because they did not express psychological anger. Therefore, they longed for human relationships. They wanted to talk openly to someone about their harsh life. However, they could not openly talk to anyone around them. In spite of the impending end of the interview, they continued to cry. Some participants waited for another interview.

I want to die, even if neighbors praised my daughter-in-law, nobody understands my feelings. But I want to express them. There is nobody to talk to. I am always alone. . (Participant 7)

I waited for you (author of this study). I waited for the time when you come here. You listened to the stories of a person like me and visited my ugly house. I could not express myself to anybody. (Participant 9)

You listened to me and were cool about it. There is a huge void owing to my frustration. Nobody visited me. I felt better on talking with you (author of this study). (Participant 8)

A participant asked authors to study for them such as the poor or isolated people. We can guess what

a difficult life this participant may have had, who cried throughout her interview.

I cried a lot, so I am relaxed now. Please you keep conducting studies for people like us. I am a lonely person. I want you to remember my story forever. Your study should lead the poor and isolated people. (Participant 3)

Thank you for Listening to my story

Participants regretted that the interviews were over and wanted to meet the researcher again. They identified themselves as poor and low people, and repeatedly thanked the researcher. Participants said that they confessed for the first time and kept their feelings hidden for a long time. They said that the researcher was the first person who listened to them with interest.

Who listens to us? You are the first person who listened to my story. I appreciate it really. (Participant 7)

Thank you. Thank you very much for coming to my shabby house. Thanks again for meeting people like us. (Participant 2)

When will you come here again? I appreciate it. Good luck to you. I hope that you will meet me again. (Participant 7)

Some participants really wanted to meet the researchers again. Participants have sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, and even a husband, but they could not talk to anybody about their illness and psychological pain. Although some participants cried throughout the interview, they sincerely expressed their gratitude.

DISCUSSION

According to this study, mothers-in-law's experiences of living with an immigrant daughter-in-law could be divided into specific periods. Our findings proved that South Korea is a country that has a high prejudice and preconceptions about multicultural families, foreigners, and mixed races. South Korea has been officially interested in the welfare of multicultural families and mixed races since 2006. Therefore, the Multicultural Family Support Act was implemented in 2008, which has led to many positive changes [32]. However, the focus of multicultural family policies is biased towards language learning services and parenting support for immigrant women [32, 33]. Further, studies on multicultural families focus only on the perspectives of immigrant women.

The participants of this study had psychological, social, and physical problems, but were an underprivileged class that is excluded from multicultural policies and research. In the early stage of marriage, participants with a son who married an immigrant had a significantly high level of psychological stress due to the guilt and due to the negative perceptions of neighbors. Worldwide, and in South Korea, the number of international marriages is

rapidly increasing. Among them, multicultural families have played an important role in reshaping parts of the Korean society [2]. However; this study revealed that the perceptions of neighbors and relatives regarding multicultural families continued to be negative. Therefore, elderly participants were tormented by their own guilt, their neighbors' guilt, and changes in relationships with neighbors and relatives. The deep-rooted bias against immigrant or multicultural families in South Korea cannot be overcome easily. Emphasizing on a homogeneous culture and discriminating against immigrant immigrants and mixed races are not a problem of an individual, as it is the present emotion throughout South Korea. The participants of this study considering disability and international marriage of their son as a result made by their sin but it is a social problem and should calibrate them. Therefore, professional counseling and appropriate therapeutic approaches are necessary.

Treatment provided to people from multicultural families should be different from that provided to those from regular families. Assessment and engagement of multicultural and interracial families should consider the family life cycle stage, and the racial salience and culture of origin [34]. Family lifecycle stages include the beginning of the family, birth of the first child, families in middle years, and aging families [35]. Thus, all members of multicultural families should include during treatment. In the beginning of 2006, several Multicultural Family Support Centers were established across South Korea, and currently, more than 200 centers are operating all over the country [33]. However, these centers focus on immigrant women's and their children's educational activities rather than offering professional counseling services [33]. Fortunately, such centers are located in cities as well as in rural areas. To cater to the therapeutic needs of multicultural families, a professional family therapist who can counsel all the members of a multicultural family should be placed in the center. Such a system is already operational in several countries, where counseling and therapy are provided in such centers [34]. Thus, if the centers in South Korea also offer professional family therapy; it will be of great help to multicultural families.

In Confucian countries, a mother-in-law is the party in power. Especially in South Korea, a daughter-in-law is expected to follow the mother-in-law's orders owing to filial piety for the parents-in-law, which is emphasized upon in Confucian countries like South Korea [10, 19]. Therefore, mothers- and daughters-in-law are often viewed as rivals in the Confucian culture [22]. However, participants of this study were mothers-in-law who did not seem to have power and did not view their daughter-in-law as a rival. They did not even express their dissatisfaction against the daughter-in-law and lived enduring each day. A struggle between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law have also been

reported in Western countries [23]. However, problems between a mother- and daughter-in-law in a multicultural family need to be solved through communicating with each other. Immigrant women are able to learn the language through multicultural family support centers, but it is not easy for the elderly mother-in-law to learn the daughter-in-law's language. Fortunately, the participants of this study were found to overcome their conflicts with their daughter-in-law by teaching her about the Korean culture and customs. It took several years and concerted efforts on the participants to develop this relationship. The problem of an aging society is that, owing to the nuclear family system, the elderly is increasing becoming responsible for self-management despite suffering from chronic diseases [36]. The present participants performed psychological self-management for accepting their son's international marriage. Therefore, a program that provides simple language and cultural guidance about the immigrant women's home countries for older participants would help them.

Hwa-Byung is a Korean somatization disorder, a mental illness that arises when family members (such as mother-in-law, husband abuse) are unable to confront their anger because of conditions that they perceive to be unfair and conflicting [31]. Hwa-Byung has been observed in Korean immigrants to the United States. In general, the incidence is higher in middle-aged women in Korea, and in Korean women who immigrated to foreign countries [31, 37]. Although participants of this study were not immigrants, they, for the most part, had Hwa-Byung. The researchers can guess that participants who accept an immigrant woman daughter-in-law experience the level of stress that is experienced by those who immigrate to a foreign country. Hwa-Byung should be treated through mental health services, psychological counseling, etc [17]. However, because the present participants lived in rural areas, it was not easy for them to visit a psychiatrist. These participants did not receive medical care for their psychological and physical illnesses. In East Asian, countries that predominantly follow the Confucian ideology, a married son and daughter-in-law expected to live with their parents. The daughter-in-law is an important caregiver of the elderly [20, 38]. However, the South Korean tradition of extended families is changing to that of nuclear families, and the role of the daughter-in-law in the household is increasingly diminishing due to women's social advancement. In particular, the participants of this study not taken care of by the immigrant daughter-in-law due to several reasons such as communication problems and cultural differences. Immigrant women not forced to be a caregiver for the elderly, and they tried to understanding South Korea's culture. Additionally, they need to consider the Korean traditional culture and should make efforts to identify practical solutions for such problems. If a person perceives danger, in the reality of that person's lived experience, there is danger [28]. Participants had the

physical and psychosocial health dangers in this study. This study recommended that nurses play a role as advocate, educator and counselor for them. In particular, nationally nurses who as advocates should help them to have a supportive system. National interest in these problems, through social welfare and medical services, is required. A center close to rural areas should periodically examine the health status of the elderly family members and the roles of such centers would extend the collaborating with specialized institutions.

The elderly participants in the present study were at an age at which one prepares for death. However, problems like the possibility of their daughter-in-law abandoning their son caused anxiety in the elderly. According to a study by Lim [2], “runaway brides” began to emerge when Korean-Chinese women who migrated from China married Korean rural men in the early 1990s. In order to solve the problem of rural bridesmaids, international marriages increased with an “open door policy” for Korean-Chinese women. “Runaway brides” were once a serious problem in the Korean society, and this movie described about a job that caught the runaway daughter-in-law [39]. This movie showed that the Korean society had difficulty in accepting immigrant laborers and married immigrant women [35]. One of the participants actually had a runaway daughter-in-law, while most of them were anxious about it. Brides run away owing to the gap between the reality and their ideals [2]. Therefore, according to mothers-in-law, a marriage with “runaway brides” is like a fake marriage. An individual cannot solve problems of multicultural families. It is a social issue of older participants, and is not a personal matter. If the quality of rural life, socio-economic level, and welfare level are high, this problem will naturally decrease. However, this may take a long time to materialize.

According to Erikson [40], old age is a time with a positive task called integrity. As people grow older, they are able to develop integrity if they met a successful life. However, participants in the present study had more sighs and tears of despair than integrity. Erikson [40] believed that if people see their lives as unproductive, feel guilty and they become dissatisfied with life and develop despair. The researcher wanted to conclude this research topic with hope. However, the participants continued to cry until the end of the interviews. This study was interpreted as despair because they view their son’s international marriage as a failure or because they viewed themselves as a humble or poor person. The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law in a multicultural family is different from the typical one owing to the cultural differences. Assimilation such as cultural transformation and cultural blending occurs in multicultural family members, but it is a difficult process for all. Because the assimilation processes take a long time, it is a burden for the elderly who need to

achieve their task of integrity. The feelings of guilt pertaining to the international marriage, which the participants had not been able to speak out about, may address through national level social activities and campaigns.

The therapeutic process of multicultural families should be included respecting culture [34]. Successfully overcoming cultural conflicts can change cultural borderlands into fertile grounds [16]. Assessment of all family members should necessarily be included in the future multicultural projects and studies. Based on this, program development and intervention studies to prevent and respect cultural conflicts will have to conduct. Researchers need to pay attention to the words of one participant who said that they should conduct studies for poor people like themselves. Such studies would set a real research objective to search for experiences of alienated people and to find solutions to their problems.

This study was limited in that the sample was a small. The 10 women were geographically located in rural areas. Thus, this sample was not represented mother-in-law of multicultural family in South Korea. However, these researchers had made effort to increase the trustworthiness at each phases of the thematic analysis.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers have no financial or personal conflicts of interest in this study.

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