

A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF CONFUCIANISM CULTURE BY CHINESE MARRIAGE MIGRANT WOMEN FOCUSING ON THE FILIAL DUTY

YOUNG HUN OH¹, MI SUK PARK² & JIA CHEN³

¹Professor, Department of Multicultural Education, INHA University, Incheon, South Korea

^{2,3}Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Multicultural Education, INHA University, Incheon, South Korea

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how marriage migrants perceive the culture of filial duty in Korea in comparison to the culture of their home country.

We selected nine Chinese marriage migrant women and had in-depth interviews with them for two months, from March, 2014 to May, 2014. The contents of the interview were analyzed into the following classifications, based on the three fundamental principles and the five moral disciplines in human relations: (1) There should be affection between father and son (2) Husband and wives should maintain distinction and (3) Elders first.

These results will contribute first, in the opportunity to look into the actual family life of marriage migrant women and second, in the supply of data for the sake of composing a filial duty education program for marriage migrant women in Korea.

KEYWORDS: Chinese Marriage Migrant Women, Filial Duty Culture, Affection between Father and Son, Husband and Wife Should Maintain Distinction, Elders First

INTRODUCTION

In Korea, carrying on the family line has long been regarded to be a filial duty to ancestors. One of the origins of marriage migrant women dwelling in Korea, started as Korean parents, whose son had reached a marriageable age but was no longer capable of carrying on his family, began to seek Southeast Asian brides to carry on the family line. Based on this social phenomenon, marriage migrant women who came to Korea are making their efforts to adjust to the Korean society by familiarizing themselves to and experiencing Korea's customs and culture.

However, while marriage migrant women are doing their best to learn and adjust to the Korean culture which is different from their original cultural background, they also go through confusion about family culture such as relationships with their parents-in-law. Filial duty is closely related with marriage migrant women's adjustment to Korean life since it lies on the basis of Korean culture. Although many marriage migrant women adopt filial piety in a positive way, conflict sometime occurs due to a negative perception of culture that is different from theirs. Furthermore, chances are low for marriage migrant women to learn due to a lack of programs and research related to filial duty. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully examine what they think of filial duty, how they are putting it into practice and what sort of difficulties they experience in that process.

Therefore, this study will focus on marriage migrant women's concept of filial duty through their experience in a Korean household and how they perceive the culture of filial duty in Korea compared to that of their home country.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Concept of Filial Duty in Confucianism

Filial duty is a compound idiograph of 'old (老)' and 'son (子)'. Interpreting this letter as a child holding up his parents, the meaning of filial duty is to serve parents faithfully. Filial piety originates from Mencius's 'five moral disciplines'. The five disciplines are benevolence (仁), righteousness (義), courtesy (禮), and faith (信), which are the basic morals of Confucianism. According to the Encyclopedia of Korean Culture (1991), filial piety refers to filial duty (孝), courtesy (悌), and love (慈), having close relationship with the father, the mother being benevolent, the child being dutiful to his parents, the older brother being brotherly and the younger brother being respectful; it is a value that composes the fundamentals of family ethics. Therefore, within the era of filial duty, parents are benevolent to their children, while children show sincere respect to their parents, referring to this mutual love as the essential element of filial duty (Hye-sook, Sul, 2009).

The filial duty of Korea has been highly influenced by the 'three fundamental principles and the five moral disciplines' of human relations. It composes Korea's basic ethics and morals, having long been the roots of our daily lives. The three fundamental principles consist of the following contents that define the relationship between king and retainer, father and son, and husband and wife: (1) The retainer should be loyal to the king, (2) The son should be loyal to the father, and (3) The wife should be loyal to the husband. The five moral disciplines are defined to be as follows: (1) There should be affection between father and son, (2) There should be loyalty between king and retainer, (3) Husband and wife should maintain distinction, (4) Elders first, and (5) Faith should reign over the relation between friends. While filial duty is that of sons and daughters, the three fundamental principles and the five moral disciplines are the duties as a human being, meaning that the former should be fulfilled within the era of the latter (Ki-seok, Kwon, 2004).

Therefore, the concept of filial duty is to show loyalty between husband and wife, respect parents, follow their intentions and furthermore respect all elders. This study will expand the concept of filial duty from the simple meaning of supporting parents, or duties between parent-child or husband-wife, to filial duty to all elders.

Marriage Migrant Women and Filial Duty Culture

Marriage migrant women are foreign women who immigrated to Korea through marriage. The rate of marriage migrant women is recently increasing, one out of ten marriages being international marriages, and in 2013, there are about 280 thousand marriage migrant women (Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2013). For the sake of this increasing number of marriage migrant women's settlement in Korea, the government is making support and arranging policies. However, despite these efforts, marriage migrant women are going through diverse difficulties regarding issues of communication, child rearing, loneliness, and financial problems (Research on Multicultural Families, 2012). What is more is that those who are living together with their parents-in-law are going through conflicts due to issues concerning Korea's filial piety culture, such as patriarchy or the notion of preferring a son to a daughter.

However, traditional filial duty culture is deriving several problems as time and space are changing. In traditional filial duty culture, women inside a household could not make any suggestions and had to be forced to sacrifice themselves according to powerful common law (Seok-ju, Lee, 2012). That is why Korean mothers-in-law are expecting the same duties of their daughters-in-law as they had done in the past, leading to the same demand of marriage

migrant women from a different cultural era. Marriage migrant women go through many hardships due to this basic custom of this filial duty. The relationship between marriage migrant women and parents-in-law, especially mothers-in-law, is on the basis of filial piety, therefore forcing absolute obedience and endurance, arousing a conflict over the issue of filial duty. This is because proper filial duty education is not being implemented on Korea's family relationships or actual advice on the daily lives within the family. Therefore, there needs to be an adjustment of the programs, which partially consist of Korean language or Korean culture education, so that there can be concrete access to Korea's filial duty culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study examines the perceptions and experiences of marriage migrant women on Korea's filial duty culture that they go through within their household. The time period of this research goes from March, 2013 to May, 2013. In order to examine what marriage migrant think of the meaning of filial duty, how they perceived it, and what sort of difficulties they went through in this process, an in-depth interview has been carried out in subject of nine research participants. Their general characteristics are as follows:

Table 1: General Characteristics of Research Participants

Participant	Residence in Korea (years)	Children	How to get to Know Each Other	Remarry	Cohabitation with Parents-in-Law
1	12	2	Free-love	x	o
2	8	2	matchmaker	o	o
3	8	1	Free-love	x	x
4	7	1	matchmaker	o	x
5	5	1	matchmaker	o	x
6	8	2	Free-love	o	o
7	5	1	Free-love	o	x
8	12	1	matchmaker	o	o
9	5	1	Free-love	x	o

This study is a qualitative case study that utilizes personal in-depth interviews. First, in order to collect data, we contacted marriage migrant women who coincide with the purpose of the study, explaining about the research, and selected those who had the will to participate. We explained that the interviews were no more than for research purposes and that they will be carried out anonymously. We collected data from each personal in-depth interview and made additional questions through phone calls for parts that needed more elaboration. The interviews were appointed previously with the marriage migrant women and were processed in quite cafes. The contents of the questionnaires consisted of the meaning of filial duty, experience of it, and difficulties of its practice. The interview method was to utilize the previously prepared questionnaire and question the participants in a conveniently fostered atmosphere, the duration of each interview being about 40 minutes to one hour.

RESEARCH RESULTS

EXPERIENCE ON THE AFFECTION BETWEEN FATHER AND SON (父子有親)

Marriage in Korea for Parents and Siblings

The essential of filial duty is to repay parents' love. This filial action originates from sincere love toward parents. Marriage migrant women immigrated to Korea in the hope for a new life and escape from poverty by acquiring the status

as a wife of a Korean man who is in a middle-low class. However, many answered that they married a Korean man in order to financially support their family remaining in their home country.

"I came to Korea to save my parents and siblings. I send them money since the day I got married." (Participant 3)

"The younger the child, the more I think about my parents. The younger the marriage migrant women and her child, the more they turn their mind to their home." (Participant 7)

Participant 3 said that the reason she chose to have an international marriage in Korea is to support her financially difficult family. She added that she wanted to help her family through her sacrifice. Participant 7 said that all she ever recalled after coming to Korea was her parents, and it was confirmed that the younger the marriage migrant woman or her child is, the more will a woman get this feeling.

Chinese do not Force Children of Filial Duty

Filial duty is the essence of human behavior and the basics of human virtue that makes human a human. However, nowadays, filial duty contains the complexity of modern society and relationship. As there is a saying that children cannot read their parents' thoughts no matter how much they try, marriage migrant women who have become parents say that they do not want to force their child of the duties of filial piety.

"I do not want to force my child to support us or give whole-hearted respect. How much burden would that be? I did not come to Korea because they told me to do so, but I would not want my child to go through hardships because of me." (Participant 1)

Participant 1 said that she does not want to implement her children of filial duties. She also did not choose to make an international marriage because of force, but she was worried that her children might also live with the burden of supporting their parents. It can be seen that marriage migrant women do not wish to pass down their lives to their children.

EXPERIENCE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE (夫婦有別)

Korean and Chinese Husbands Treat their Wives Differently

The task of sustaining a marriage life between a man and woman of completely different backgrounds will not be easy. Especially, many marriage migrant women already have marriage experience previously to the marriage with a Korean man. They said that Korean and Chinese husbands treat their wives differently.

"Chinese husbands are very kind and affectionate to their wives but Korean husbands do not know how to care for their wives, perhaps because women are too mild." (Participant 2)

"Korean husbands say that if the wife is pretty, the wife's home also seems lovely, but there is no such thing in China." (Participant 8)

Participant 2 and 8 stated that their Chinese ex-husband and current Korean husband treated them and their family differently. The participants said that a husband should treat his wife fairly in order to treat the wife's family equally good, but Korean husbands, unlike Chinese husbands, ignore their wives or treat them badly. They perceived that women in China are served by their husbands, while in Korea, it is the opposite. This means that there are still deep roots of patriarchy and male chauvinism within the Korean society.

B. Korea does not Entrust Wives with Financial Issues

Since it is a virtue to have faith between husband and wife, marriage migrant women also claim that the most needed manners in marriage life is faith and trust. Marriage migrant women responded that husbands should put their faith in their wives.

"My husband does not entrust me with his income. As far as I am concerned, there are not many husbands that entrust their foreign wives with their salary. I think he is worried that I might send the money to my family in China." (Participant 4)

"My husband rarely gives me any money. In China, no matter what the husband's job is, the wife is entrusted with the money. Most women have the financial rights and all other rights in the family." (Participant 7).

Participant 4 and 7 said that their Korean husbands do not entrust them with the income perhaps because the husbands are worried that their wives might send the money to their home in China. Also, participant 7 added that in China, it is women who take care of the money, whereas in Korea, the husband hardly gives her any money, which is why she wants to have a job of her own. In order for marriage migrant women, who go through many troubles because of different culture and values, to sustain a normal life in Korea and for the sake of their children's education, husbands should entrust their wives with financial issues.

EXPERIENCE OF ELDERS FIRST (長幼有序)

A. Koreans Take Better Care of Elders than Chinese

On top of Confucius's concept of benevolence, Mencius added the virtue of righteousness, emphasizing filial piety and brotherly love. While filial piety is about serving parents, brotherly love is to respect all elders in society, apart from siblings. Koreans have long taken care of and respected elders as their parents. However, marriage migrant women do not understand this culture properly.

"Chinese are busy living for the sake of their own family, and Chinese are not aware of taking care of elders." (Participant 4)

"Koreans help a grandmother get up to her feet if she has fallen to the ground even if she is not her own grandmother. Chinese are not like that. They make a good laugh about it because the matter does not concern their own needs." (Participant 4)

Participant 4 said that she experienced Koreans' attitudes of yielding and patience to elders who are not even their parents, whereas in China, perhaps because life is hard, people rarely show respect to elder people. Yet, she did mention that she has seen many cases in which people should do well to elders unilaterally or young people were forced to do their duties to elders because of Korea's filial duty culture.

B. Koreans Say Elders are Right even Though they are Wrong

Koreans have the tendency to consent to and respect elder people's words without contradiction. This is due to the long-settled culture of filial duty. However, marriage migrant women do not understand this sort of culture.

"Koreans say grandmothers are right even though they are wrong" (Participant 1)

"Koreans do not eat before elders pick up their spoon. It is different in China. We retort back to elders."
(Participant 8)

Participant 1 said that she does not understand the Korean culture of saying right to what is wrong of elders. Participant 8 said that scenes such as not eating before elders pick up their spoon or enduring just because someone is old cannot be seen in China. In Korea, respect towards elders is emphasized, especially on the focus of family.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to examine how marriage migrant women from China are experiencing and practicing the culture of filial duty in Korea. The results of carrying out in-depth interviews with nine Chinese marriage migrant women are as follows:

First, in the case of affection between father and son, most marriage migrant women tried to do their duties toward their parents. The filial duty toward their parents in their home country was not that different to that of Korea's perception of filial duty, and despite the cultural differences between the culture of filial piety, many marriage migrant women made efforts to follow the Korean culture.

Second, about the principle concerning the relationship of husband and wife, while in China, women are cared for; Korean women were forced to have patience.

Third, about the third principle of "Elders first," China regards family relationships to be important whereas Koreans also respect neighboring elders. Marriage migrant women said that they regarded filial duty to be originated from China, but think that its ideas and education are more dealt with in Korea.

By examining the conflict matters regarding filial duty, this study will be able to contribute to the improvement of each country's filial duty culture from an inter-cultural aspect and offer preliminary data for the organization of filial duty education programs for marriage migrant women in Korea.

REFERENCES

1. Doo-hyeon Kim, Seonhwa Choi, Research on Filial Duty and the Spirit of Volunteer Work. *Korean Thought and Culture*, 2009, 48, pp. 345-372.
2. Ui-cheol Kim, Young-shin Park, An Indigenous Psychology Analysis on the Perception of the Quality of Life of Adolescents and Adults: A Focus on Family, School, Work Place and Leisure. *Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy Health*, 9(4), 2004, pp. 973-1002.
3. Jung-hee Kim, The Level of Perception on an Aging Society by the Methodist Church and An Educational Consideration of Filial Duty in the Bible. *A Journal of Christian Education in Korea*, 29, 2012, pp. 321-346.
4. Hae-ran Kim, Yoon-jung Kim, Culture: A Study on the Sustentation Stress of Chinese Family Supporters-Current Status of Traditional Family Sustentation Values. *Eastern Studies*. 20, 2011, pp. 277-309.
5. Ik-soo Kim, Korean Idea Philosophy: The Establishment and Course of Succession of Confucianism, Globalization of Filial Duty Education Culture. *Korean Thought and Culture*, 59, 2001, pp. 283-332, Korean Thought and Culture Association.

6. Mun-jo Bae, Se-jeong Park, Factors that Influence University Students' Perception of Filial Duty and Family Values. *The Korea Contents Association*, 13(5), 2013, pp. 275-285.
7. Hye-suk Seol, *A Study on the Educational Significance of Filial Piety and Instruction Plan: A Focus on Elementary School Classroom*. *Busan University Education College*, master's thesis, 2009.
8. Seok-joo Lee, *Korea's Filial Piety and the Dilemma of Confucianism*. *Korea's Adolescence Culture*, 19, 2012, pp. 257-285.
9. Jung-ae Jung, Young-sook Park, A Study on the Perception of Filial Duty and Self-efficacy of Korean Women and Marriage Migrant Women. *Korea's Adolescence Culture*, 10, 2009, pp. 115-141.
10. Jeong-hyeon Cho, The Essentials of Filial Duty in Won Buddhism. *Filial Piety Research*, 10, 2009, pp. 63-87.
11. Jun-ha Cho, Filial Piety and Filial Duty Culture: A Study on Korea's Spirit and Filial Duty Culture. *Korea's Adolescence Culture*, 17, 2011, pp. 37-58.
12. Kyung-sun Chae, A Study on the Relation between Children's Filial Duty Perception and Leadership. *Filial Piety Research*, 16, 2012, pp. 51-68.
13. Kyung-sook Choi, A Study on Filial Duty Perception and Practice toward Parents-in-Law and Parents. *Human Development Research* 5(2), 1998, pp. 128-148.
14. Seung-min Choi, *A Study on Filial Piety in the Old Testament*. *Filial Piety Research*, 9, 2009, pp. 141-166.
15. Jae-duk Choi, A Study on the Settlement of Biblical Filial Duty through Leadership: A Focus on Family Community. *Filial Piety Research*, 9, 2009, pp. 189-214.
16. Ki-hye Hong, Gender Politics on Immigration through Marriage of Chinese Women and Korean Men. *Women's Studies Excursion*, 17, 2000, pp. 329-330.
17. Hyun-ok Hong, The Past and Present of Chinese Filial Piety. *Honam Culture Research*, 35, 2000, pp. 23-45.
18. Il-sik Hong, A New Universalism and Filial Piety. *The Civilization Journal*, 3(1), 2002, pp. 25-36.

