

Multiple roles of Korean Immigrant wives Depression

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Introduction

The depression experienced by Korean immigrant wives is associated with numerous stressors : minority status in the U.S., poor English language skills, the heavy burden caused by a combination of fulltime employment and traditional performance of household tasks(Rhee, 1993 ; K. C. Kim & Hurh, 1988) ; crowded living conditions ; and diminished social status (Um, 1987).

Another major stressor is employment. Although their husbands earned enough in Korea to support their families, here the husbands generally do not earn enough to support their families (K. C. Kim & Hurh, 1988). So, Korean immigrant wives may feel depressed because their annual earnings are generally not consistent with the level of education they attained in Korea (Hurh & Kim, 1984). They work long hours as waitress, cooks, and seamstress(Hurh & Kim, 1984 ; K. C. Kim & Hurh, 1988) and earn much less money. In the United States the earnings of employed immigrant wives, whether they were

professional women or housewives in Korea, are extremely low(S. Kim & Rew, 1994 ; Park, 1987 ; Rhee, 1993 ; Um, 1987). Korean immigrant wives also feel role conflict and role strain occur when Korean immigrant wives are forced to perform simultaneously the multiple roles of wage earner, household worker, parent, and spouse.

One of the main factors that is related to married women's depression has been documented to be a negative psychological impact of multiple roles on their mental health. Nevertheless, there has been a severe lack of studies in this area regarding Korean immigrant wives.

Perception of wives' work role and coping strategies they used to deal with role strain and role conflict. Perception of wives' work role can be either legitimate or illegitimate.

Korean immigrant wives also tend to have more traditional gender role norms due to cultural and traditional beliefs and thus may perceive their work role is illegitimate. They may feel depressed as a result (K. C. Kim & Hurh, 1998 ; K. C. Kim & Kim, 1994).

American Caucasian wives with more tra-

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ditional gender role norms also tend to experience more depression. However, American Caucasian wives with more modern gender role norms tend to perceive their work role as legitimate and thus have better mental health outcomes.

Wives' perceptions about their work role influence which coping strategies they select (Emmons et al., 1990 ; Hall, 1972 ; Hall & Hall, 1978 ; Ross et al., 1983 ; Voydanoff, 1987).

Literature review : Most of the studies in this review supported multiple roles as a strong predictor for depression. Most data, however, were not from Korean immigrant wives but from American Caucasian wives. Most of the literature indicated that accumulation of role stresses and demands was significantly related to employed Caucasian wives' depression. In America, Korean immigrant wives were more depressed than American wives. More studies are needed to examine the relationship between multiple roles and depression among Korean immigrant wives.

The literature supported the premise that depression was related to the wife's perception that her work role was illegitimate. Wives were less depressed when they perceived their work role as legitimate. Most of the literature indicated that wives perceived multiple roles as illegitimate, especially when they had school-age children : this perception created serious stress and tensions. Perceiving their work roles as illegitimate, wives used the working harder coping strategy. Traditional gender role beliefs influenced Korean immigrant wives' perceptions about their work role. Most data were not on Korean immigrant wives, but on Caucasian American wives. A few studies examined how Korean immigrant wives and husbands perceived the wives' work role. Additional studies are needed to examine how the Korean immigrant wives perceive their work roles, and how they cope with their multiple roles and depression.

Most of the studies revealed three types of coping strategies. The review also revealed that

the priority role setting and the working harder coping strategy were strongly related to depression in employed wives. There was a significant association between inter-role conflict and the choice of coping strategies such as priority role setting and working harder. Wives using priority role setting and working harder coping strategies, tend to have little help with housework from family members. Wives tend to have lower depression if they had an equitable division of housework. The equitable division may have decreased tension between husband and wife and increased the husband's responsibility for sharing housework. Most data, however, were not on Korean immigrant wives, but on Caucasian American wives. Only few studies in this review assessed Korean immigrant wives who were employed and what coping strategies they used. There is limited data on Korean immigrant wives and how they cope, we need additional studies to examine the relationship between perception of their employment and how they cope.

Purpose of the study : The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships among how the employed Korean immigrant wife perceive her work role, how she copes with the multiple roles she must play, and depression.

Research Questions :

1. What are the relationships of Korean immigrant wives' age, number of children, and family income with depression?
2. What is the relationship between perception of the wife's work role and depression?
3. What are the relationship between coping strategies and depression?
4. What is the relationship between perception of the wife's work role and coping strategies?
5. What are the relationships among perception of the wife's work role, coping strategies, and depression?
6. What is the relationship between time spent for housework and depression?

Conceptual Framework : A conceptual model

integrating Lazarus and Folkman's(1984) theory of stress and coping with Goode's(1960) role strain theory was developed to describe how Korean immigrant wives perceive their work role and coping strategies they used to manage multiple roles. Lazarus and Folkman's(1984) theory of stress and coping is appropriate to explain Korean immigrant wives' stress and coping for three reasons. First, as a cognitive appraisal of stress and coping, theory emphasizes appraisal of personal and social resources in dealing with stress and coping. Secondly, the theory acknowledges the importance of context in stress and coping situations. And, lastly, Lazarus and Folkman's(1984) theory, or the stress-coping theory, assumes a reciprocal relationship between a person and environment and stressful situation. This theory is based on the belief that human beings are active agents who perceive, evaluate, choose, and shape their environment, or situations to some extent and therefore can prevent certain kinds of stress from happening(Lazarus & Launier, 1978). The stress-coping theory focuses on the role of cognitive appraisal and coping process as mediators between the imposition of multiple roles and depression.

Methodology : A cross-sectional survey research design was used to gather self-report data from working, married Korean immigrant women regarding their perceptions of their work role, their strategies for coping with multiple roles, and their level of depression. The relationships between work role, coping strategies, and depression were examined using correlation analysis. This study was conducted in the metropolitan area of a Midwestern city. The metropolitan area consisted of the city and its surrounding suburbs. Population consisted of all married Korean immigrant women who resided in the metropolitan area. The selection criteria were that the participant be a married Korean immigrant women aged 25 to 55 years old, who lived with her husband, worked at least 20 hours per

week, and was able to read, write, and understand Korean. The women were recruited from Christian churches in the metropolitan area ; 77% of Korean immigrants attend Christian churches (K. C. Kim & Kim, 1996). Recruitment was limited to churches with at least 100 members. A systemic randomly determined starting point in the alphabetic directory was used to identify every fifth church with 100 or more members(12 churches) for inclusion in a convenience sample for the study. The variables measured were the wives' appraisal for their work role, coping strategies, and depression. The wives' appraisal of their work role was measured with a modified sex role orientation scale(Dreyer, Woods, & James, 1981) ; coping strategies were measured with a modified version of Hall's(1972) Coping with Role Conflict scale ; role sharing was measured with a modification of Blair and Johnson's(1992) Division of Household Labor scale, and depression was measured by Radloff's (1977) Center for Epidemiological Study-Depression Scale(CES-D). In addition, a demographic questionnaire was included in the self-administered instrument.

The instrument was pretested with 22 Korean immigrant women at the Korean Self-Help Center in Chicago who were interested in research about women. There were two sessions, one in the daytime, with 12 women, and one in the evening with 10 women. After they completed the preliminary form of the instrument, they joined in a discussion about the format of the questionnaires and their responses were recorded. The researcher tested the pilot study data collection procedure at one of the Korean churches that met the study criteria but was not one of those selected. She called the minister and asked permission to gather data at his church. During the church service on the data collection day the minister announced the study to the churchgoers. After the service, 45 women took instrument packets and 33 women returned them. It took

them from 30 to 40 minutes to complete the questions. At the end of the packet were some open-ended questions asking for their comments about the instrument itself. Based on their comments, most of the open-ended questions asking for their comments about the instrument itself. Based on their comments, most of the open-ended questions were eliminated before the data collection began for the current study. Before actual research data collection began, the ministers at the 12 Korean churches were contacted by phone to discuss the study. Then they were sent a copy of the study plan for approval of the study at their church. Eleven ministers accepted and one rejected the request. The researcher called the 11 ministers and asked for the name and telephone number of the president of the church women's group. She called 25 women and invited them to come to the Korean Self-Help Center to learn about research concerning Korean women and to be trained as a research assistant to help gather data. All 25 women accepted the invitation and attended three training sessions with the researcher. At the first session Dr. K. C. Kim and researcher talked with them for about 2 hours about research. The second session covered the language of the questionnaires and lasted about an hour. The final session also lasted an hour and trained the women to screen potential volunteers for eligibility. If a woman was unable to attend one of the training sessions, the researcher talked with her on the phone to cover the information she had missed. The researcher prepared posters with the eligibility criteria and a set of guidelines for distributing and administering the survey for each research assistant. Each research assistant was asked to recruit and train additional research assistants from her church so that there would be no more than 10 subjects for each research assistant on data collection day at her church.

In January 1997, the researcher and her research assistants began to visit the churches.

The women who wanted to be in the study were asked if they were between 25 to 55, how many hours a week they worked, and if they were living with their husbands. Women who were qualified received a brief explanation of the study and a packet with a verbal consent form, the survey questionnaires, a sharpened pencil. There were many women who did not meet the eligibility criteria and pleaded with the research assistant to make an exception so they could participate in the study. They were politely turned away. In order to reach as many potential subjects as possible, the researcher visited churches not only for Sunday morning services but also Sunday and Friday evening services, choir rehearsals, and women's group meeting—in short, all occasions where eligible women might be present, staying as long as necessary to gather the data. The project was reviewed for protection of human subjects by the Human Subjects Protection Committee of the University of Illinois at Chicago and received their approval. The women were informed of their rights related to participation in the study. Verbal consent was obtained from all subjects, because many Korean immigrants are not comfortable signing informed consent forms. No negative consequences were suffered by individuals who chose not to participate in the study. The church women were informed that the general results of the study would be made available to them and that reports of the study findings would make no reference to any specific participant.

All instruments except CES-D, which had already been translated into a Korean version, were independently translated into Korean by three bilingual scholars from different fields of research. Then the three translations were merged into a single version of the instrument in Korean. Another bilingual person made two separate translations of the instrument back into English to check the accuracy of the original translations. To evaluate the content validity of

the instruments, bilingual scholars in the fields of psychology, sociology, psychiatry, and public health read both the English and Korean versions. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final instrument.

Power analysis was used to determine the appropriate sample size for the study.

The data were collected, coded, and entered into a computer data file using SPSS software for the University of Illinois at Chicago main-frame computer. In the first stage of analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated for the demographic variables. The scales were factor analyzed using principal components analysis with varimax rotation. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal reliability of the factors and the total scales. In the second stage, the relationship between independent variables(demographic variables, multiple roles), mediating variables(perception of wife's work role and coping strategies), and the dependent variable(depression) were tested using multiple regression.

Results: the frequency distribution for age, over 30% of the wives were from 40 to 44 years old, with a mean age of 42 years. Fifty nine percent of the wives had completed their post secondary education in Korea; 58% had graduated from college prior to immigrating to the United States. Seventy percent had no education in the U.S. For employment in Korea, the largest group of women was housewives who did not work outside their home. The largest group of wives employed outside their home was professionals(30% of the total sample); 52% of this group had professional jobs in the U.S. About 15% were currently engaged in service jobs and about 11% in sales as well as 10% in manual labor. Looking from a different perspective, one sees that 72% of the women who had a professional job in the U.S. also had a professional job in Korea and 26% had been housewives who did not work outside the home in Korea. The other large category of jobs in Korea

was office work(20% of the total sample). Half the women who were office workers in Korea had U.S. jobs in sales(25%) and service(25%). Slightly over one fifth of women who worked in offices in Korea were also office workers in the U.S.(22%). Among the 102 women who did not work outside their home in Korea, 34% had taken service jobs in the U.S. and 19% were employed in sales. Licensure restrictions hindered women who had been professionals in Korea from obtaining similar jobs in the U.S. For many of the wives who were office workers in Korea, it is likely that language was a barrier to office work in the U.S.

The mean number of hours worked, 44.5 hours, exceeded the standard U.S. 40-hour week, and the maximum reported, 84 hours a week, was more than two full-time jobs. Over two fifth (44%) of the women worked 40-49 hours a week.

Gross personal income per year was less than \$9,999 to \$19,999 for 32.0% of the Korean immigrant wives. An annual personal gross income between \$20,000 and \$39,999 was reported by 37.1% and \$40,000 to \$60,000 or more by 30.9%. The gross family income was \$29,999 or less for 21.8% of the respondents, between \$30,000 and \$49,999 for 24.8% and \$50,000 to \$69,999 for 32.8%. A gross family income of \$70,000 to \$99,999 was reported by 13.5%, and \$100,000 or more by 6.9%. Nearly three times as many of the respondents resided in the suburbs as in the city, 74% versus 26%, respectively. Most lived in their own houses(62%) or condominiums(30%).

The mean number of children reported was 2.0. Over half(53.2%) of the Korean immigrant wives arrived in the U.S. between 1977 and 1986.

Psychometric Properties of the instruments :

Each of the instruments used in the current study was analyzed using a principal components analysis with a varimax rotation and a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0. J. Stevens(1986, pp.344-345) stated that sample size should be taken into account when determining what value indicates an

item loads on a given factor. Thus, for the current sample of 282, a factor loading greater than .308 would be statistically significant at the .01 level. In this study items were required to have a factor loading of at least .40 for inclusion in a factor. In addition to low factor loadings, items were deleted from scales if they had near-zero or negative item-total correlations for internal consistency as measured by Cronbach alpha. In those cases when an item loaded at .40 on more than one factor, it was included in the factor with the higher loading.

All the instruments have alpha values that fell within the range generally accepted as indicating scale reliability.

Findings and discussion : Multiple regression was used to identify the amount of variance of depression as measured by the CES-D that can be explained by the Korean immigrant wives age, number of children, and gross family income. Only the number of children and gross family income were significant in explaining depression among Korean immigrant wives. The fact that mothers in this study who had fewer children were more depressed may have been related to Korean immigrants' value system. Traditionally, Koreans have thought that having many children is one of the blessings from Heaven, and parents feel that raising healthy, successful children is important. Having many children also may mean having many future resources for the family, including more manpower and a continuation of the family. Thus, having fewer children than they want may have contributed to the manifestation of a depressive mood. In addition, a lack of children may contribute to a feeling of loneliness and a lack of social support. Other studies have also shown lower levels of depression to be related to higher family income. Having an income sufficiently high to pay for rent, food, and other living expenses is especially important for Korean immigrant families because they do not like to ask relatives or neighbors to loan them money.

It is considered shameful to borrow money from other people.

Financial Need made a statistically significant contribution to the explanation of CES-D variance. The study result indicated that the more the wives viewed their work role as illegitimate and more they had to work due to financial need, the higher their CES-D score or level of depression. Others (Hurh & Kim, 1990 ; Rhee, 1993) found that wives who chose to work because it would help their career development. In the current study, most of the respondents believed that wives should stay home to do the housework and take care of family members, a view supported by the traditional gender role concept. Wives who were employed in U.S. Worked primarily to supplement the family income. they carried the double burden of having to work in low status, low income jobs and at the same time being expected to completed all household tasks as if they were not working outside the home (Hurh & Kim, 1988).

The coping strategy of working hard provided a statistically significant contribution to the explanation of the variance in depression. The more frequently the wife had to perform the household tasks, the more depressed she was. Coping with stress by working hard to complete all household tasks (hard work) was statistically significant in explaining depression for Korean immigrant wives. The harder the wives worked (instead of discussing the problems or negotiating for help with their husband), the higher the level of depression. this findings is consistent with the findings of previous studies (K. C. Kim & Hurh, 1988 ; K. C. Kim, Kim, 1994 ; S. Kim, 1995 ; Pearlin, 1989 ; Ross & Huber, 1985). These researchers asserted that the wives who do most of the housework despite their working outside the home (dual role) reported higher levels of depression. That the wives had to work hard at home may mean that the other family members were not sharing in the household work. The dual

role burden may increase the Korean immigrant wives' depression. the division of household tasks is especially critical in Korean families. When the tasks are shared, the wives may be less willing to accept gender-linked patterns of task division and more likely to negotiate for increasing sharing(Bird et al, 1984 ; S. Kim, 1995).

The more the women perceived their work role as illegitimate, the more they employed the coping strategy of working harder.

The more the Korean immigrant wives perceived their work role as illegitimate, the more they reported setting priorities as a coping strategy. The more that wives used the coping strategy of working harder to complete household tasks, the higher the level of depression. Korean immigrant wives in the present study who perceived their work role as illegitimate tended to work harder to complete all their household tasks and/or prioritize their work in order to cope with the additional burden of household work. Further, they declined to discuss their stress with their spouse or ask other family members to share the burden of the housework(K. C. Kim, & Hurh, 1988 ; K. C. Kim & Kim, 1994). this findings provides important information on the process by which stress may lead to psychological disturbance(depression). It may be that encouraging Korean wives to view their employment as legitimate and encouraging them to find alternatives to working harder or setting priorities will result in fewer women experiencing depression.

The more time the wives had to spend shopping for groceries, the higher their depression score. This finding supported the earlier work of Rhee(1993), who also found that the more time wives spent on housework, the higher the level of depression. The Korean immigrant wives may believe that they have to go grocery shopping in order to choose the food of choice for their meal preparation. Further, the stress of grocery shopping may increased by having to shop in a Korean store as well as a mainstream supermar-

ket. If there is a shortage of money, the wife must spend more time finding cheaper products and making sure that she obtains the best product with the money available. this process repeats itself each week, so stress and depression are cumulative.

If the women does not drive, she may take a bus or walk, adding to the time required for grocery shopping. In addition, she must frequently carry heavy products home from the store, also adding to her stress. sometimes a wife will ask her husband to drive her to the grocery store. If he goes inside with her, he may select groceries for himself that he likes to eat. The cost of the groceries may not fit within the budget. If he waits outside, he may ask her why she takes so long to shop. In either case, additional stress and conflict result(Personal communication, Korean Self-Help Center Community women, 1997).

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- 국문초록 -

주요개념 : 우울

한국 이민 주부의 다양한 역할이 우울에 미치는 영향

엄 재 정*

결혼한 여성의 우울과 관련된 주 요인의 하나는 그들의 다양한 역할이 정신적인 건강에 부정적인 영향을 심리적으로 미친다고 발표되어 있다. 그럼에도 불구하고 한국 이민 주부에 대한 이러한 영역에서의 연구가 매우 부족한 실정이다.

중서부의 주요 도시인 시카고의 도심지에 위치한 11곳의 한국인 교회에서 편의 표출 방법으로 다음과 같은 기준에 맞는 대상자를 선택하였다. 나이는 25-55세 사이, 결혼하여 남편과 함께 살고 있으며, 매주 20시간 이상씩 일하고 있는 여성 등의 기준을 충족시키는 응답자의 수는 282명이었다. 대상자들에게는 5가지의 설문 즉 인구통계학적, 우울에 대한 역학 연구, 성 역할 지향성의 지수, 역할 분담 및 대처 전략 등에 관한 질문이었다.

중다회귀분석(Multiple Regression Analysis)에서 통계학적으로 유의한 관계를 보인 것은 다음과 같았다.

주부의 자녀가 적을수록 우울의 수준은 높았고, 가족의 수입이 많을수록 우울의 수준은 낮았으며, 주부가 일하는 것이 경제적 필요를 충족시키기 위함이라고 스스로 지각(주부들은 일하는 역할이 합법적으로 판단되어지기를 원했고 또 지각했는데 이와 대조하여 일의 역할을 비합법적으로 지각하는 것)할수록 우울의 수준은 더 높았다. 비록 일하는 것이 저녁 늦게 자고 아침 일찍 일어남을 의미할지라도 모든 가사를 완수하기 위하여 열심히 일한다고 하면 할수록 우울의 수준은 더 높았다. 주부가 일의 역할을 합법적으로 지각하면 할수록 남편과 다른 가족의 구성원들에게 도움을 요청하거나 도움을 받는 것을 원하지 않았으며, 일을 더 열심히 하기 위해 대처전략과 우선순위(주부가 일을 전혀 완수 할 수 없을지라도 가정의 어떤 일이 중요하고 어느 것이 두 번째로 중요한지를 결정하는)를 더 잘 설정하고 더 잘 수용하는 것 같았다. 식품 등을 쇼핑하는데에 많은 시간을 소모할수록 우울의 수준은 더 높았다. 이 자료는 스트레스와 대처이론을 지지하고 있다.

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