

Educational Ministry with the Immigrant Wives in Korea: Practice of Love and Acceptance

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Abstract. *This research gives special attention to the existence of immigrant wives in the Korean society, many of whom have been victimized under various forms of domestic violence. This aims to give a thick description of the lives of immigrant wives in Korean society, including their experiences under domestic violence. In this study, their experiences will be analyzed explaining causes and effects of domestic violence against them. On the basis of their experiences and the analysis of those, this research will explore a ministerial practice for helping them to overcome their agonizing experiences of victimization under various types of violence in their marriage lives and then to actualize their full potential as global, multicultural resources. For this, the study will suggest the "practice of love and acceptance."*

There is a unique body of population in the landscape of the Korean society, called "immigrant wives." They migrated to Korea generally for financial reasons from several underrepresented countries in Asia such as China, Vietnam, and Philippines, as wives of Korean men through the process of "arranged international marriage". This has been an alternative pattern of marriage since the early 1990's in the Korean society, aiming to match the countryside men or the relatively lower class men in the city who could not have Korean spouses and thus passed their optimal ages for marriage with the young women from Asian countries of relatively lower economic status. Such international marriage cases are on the rapid rise and the number of immigrant wives is also rapidly increasing. According to the survey of the Ministry of Gender equality and Family of the Republic of Korea, the number of immigrant wives reached up to 161,999 in 2010, 188,580 in 2011, 196,789 in 2012, and 235,947 in 2013.¹ Such an increase of immigrant wives has brought a social interest in multiculturalism and multicultural family into wide discourses on those in the entire society of Korea, which has once been known as one of the most ethnically homogeneous countries.

But unfortunately, it has been reported that a large portion of immigrant wives in Korea have been victims of domestic violence. According to a survey, 69.1% of immigrant wives have experienced domestic violence including seriously severe physical violence cases (17.3%).² They have been suffered under various forms of domestic violence such as psychological violence, physical violence, sexual violence, economic cruelty, and cultural insults. Reasons of conflicts between Korean husbands and immigrant wives, which ended up to violent actions, might vary: patriarchal-dominating ideology, socio-cultural differences,

¹ Refer to the official webpage of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea.

http://www.mogef.go.kr/korea/view/policyGuide/policyGuide04_03_01.jsp?viewfnc1=0&viewfnc2=0&viewfnc3=1&viewfnc4=0&viewfnc5=0&viewfnc6=0

² Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of Republic of Korea. (2011). *2010 Research on the Actual Condition of Multicultural Family Domestic Violence*. Seoul, Korea: Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of Republic of Korea, p547.

economic vulnerability, individual weaknesses, language barrier and difficulties in communication, and personality differences. The victimized immigrant wives have suffered from fear, anxiety, guilt, depression, helplessness, indignity, and sense of low-self worth on top of their physical scars.

Church is to faithfully respond to and responsibly take care of all kinds of unrighteousness and dehumanization. The experience of victimized immigrant wives is the case as well. Since immigrant wives are new to Korean churches as well as other churches who share the responsibility to unmake violence for a righteous and humane world, they, especially the victimized by domestic violence, need to be given a special attention in our ministerial realm. Church should empower them to overcome the previous agonizing experiences, to be recovered and renewed from the past, and to actively re-search for their wellbeing both in the personal and social scopes. In order to do this, church needs to address how to empower them and be able to carry out specific ministerial practices for them. And this study will suggest church's "ministerial practice of love and acceptance," as one of such empowering practices for the battered and discriminated immigrant wives.

In this sense, this research will mainly explore the life stories of immigrant wives including their experiences of domestic violence, aiming to provide a thick description. If there are faith stories to be shared, it would be examined how their faith has served their dealing with the battered and discriminated experiences. The detailed causes and effects of their victimized experiences will be explained as well. Then, from the analysis of their stories and experiences, this study will search for what church and its education ministry can do for the immigrant wives, who are the victims of domestic violence in the Korean society. Although "ministerial practice of love and acceptance" is now considered to be suggested as one of the ways for church and its education to serve them, if different results come out from the analysis, this study will go with that results.

The methodology that will be mainly applied for this research is a qualitative research, while supplemented by literature-based research and insights from our faith community. Intensive interviews will be a main tool of data collection, and literatures and insights will be employed when analyzing the gathered data. This research has more steps to go. The main research question has been set (the lives of the immigrant wives including their battered and discriminated experiences) and the central issue (domestic violence against immigrant wives and educational ministry with them) was clarified. Literature review about the immigrant wives was done. From this review, basic information and concepts for immigrant wives related issues were gathered. Literature review for the initial haunch of ministerial ideas for such wives was done, which might be supplemented after analyzing research data. For collecting data, the intensive interviews will be conducted from September through October of 2014 with 12 immigrant wives from Philippines, selected due to the communication convenience. A sample interview guide and an informed consent form were created. Through these documents, all respondents will be informed about the purpose of the study and given confidentiality promise.

Through interviews, the informants are expected to share their life and faith stories, yielding a thick description of who and how they are as immigrant wives. This will tell us their experiences of domestic violence as well. I expect that these altogether will teach us how Christian education would serve them to overcome their agonizing experiences of victimization under various types of violence in their marriage lives and then to actualize their full potential as global, multicultural resources.

Sources grounding the presentation

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