

The Effects of Acculturative and Family-related Stress on the Well-being of Immigrant Women in Korea: The Mediating Effect of Hope

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Abstract

Background/ Objectives: This study was conducted to identify the structural relationships between acculturative stress, family-related stress, hope, and well-being in 609 immigrant women in 10 cities and provinces. **Methods/ Statistical Analysis:** The study conducted frequency analysis, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, structural equation modeling, and bootstrapping. **Findings:** First, acculturative stress had a negative correlation with family-related stress and also with the positive factor of well-being. In contrast, it had a positive correlation with the negative factor of well-being. Hope had a positive correlation with the positive factor of well-being but a negative correlation with the negative factor of well-being. Second, acculturative stress had a significant negative impact on hope and well-being, as did family-related stress. Hope had a statistically significant positive impact on well-being. Third, it was confirmed that hope was a mediating variable in the relationship between immigrant women's family-related stress and their well-being. **Application/ Improvement:** This study will be applicable for increasing the wellbeing of immigrant people.

Keywords: Acculturative Stress, Family-related Stress, Hope, Immigrant Women, Well-being

1. Introduction

Hope is defined as a process of identifying possibility and potential¹. It consists of pathway thinking, which identifies diverse paths to achieving desired goals, and agency thinking, which synchronizes goal-oriented direction by utilizing these paths². In addition, hope has been found to have a significant impact on stress mitigation²⁻⁶, stress coping⁷, life satisfaction, and psychological well-being^{8,9}. Meanwhile, a growing number of immigrant women decide to move to Korea for the purpose of marriage, and in this regard, there is a growing need for studies on hope among these women in order to help them settle successfully in Korean society.

Many studies have been conducted on the variables that are closely related to hope, one of which is psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is widely

regarded as the most important concept to symbolize the soundness of life¹⁰. It is also defined as a holistic concept throughout life, including subjective happiness perceived by individuals^{11,12}. Psychological well-being depends not only on the levels of happiness and life satisfaction but also whether individuals can function as members of societies¹³. That is, it is a critical variable that is directly related to immigrant women's adaptation, stress, happiness, and hope.

Immigrant women encounter diverse problems caused by acculturation because they usually move to Korea with no prior knowledge about the culture. The physical and psychological stress related to adapting to a new culture is called acculturative stress. This stress has negative impacts on psychological health such as anxiety, alienation, and identity confusion¹⁴⁻¹⁶. The majority of immigrant women are from developing countries. Thus,

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their hope for better living may be reduced due to the stress of adapting to Korean society and can also reduce their psychological well-being.

In addition, immigrant women experience stress in forming families in new societies. Personality, social, cultural, and expectation differences conflict with decisions on economic activity, children's education, and extended family relationships¹⁷. It is possible that acculturative and family-related stress are inevitable for immigrant women, but it is necessary to verify whether these stress factors directly affect their well-being.

Thus, this study was conducted to identify the relationship between acculturative stress, family-related stress, hope, and well-being among 609 immigrant women from 10 cities and provinces in Korea. To achieve this objective, this study established the following questions. First, what are the correlations between acculturative stress, family-related stress, hope, and well-being? Second, what are the structural relationships between acculturative stress, family-related stress, hope, and well-being in immigrant women. Third, is there a mediating role of hope in the relationships between acculturative stress, family-related stress, and well-being.

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

Based on previous studies, a research model was developed that is shown in Figure 1.

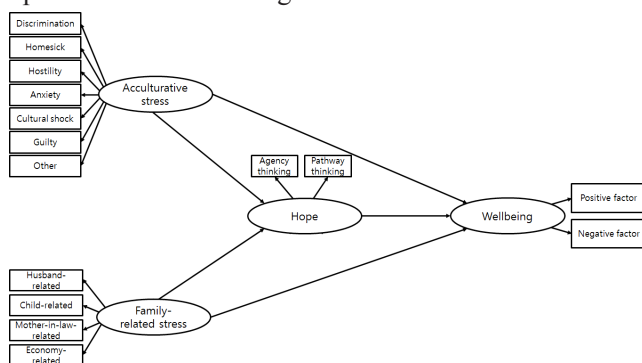


Figure 1. The research model.

2.2 Participants and Data Collection

This study selected 650 subjects from 10 of Korea's metropolitan cities and provinces: Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi-do, Gangwon-do, Chungcheongnam-do, Chungcheongbuk-do, Gyeongsangbuk-do, Gyeongsangnam-do, Jeollabuk-do and Jeollanam-do).

Of the nation's 171 multi-cultural family support centers (as of 2010), a total of 20 centers with 2 centers from each region were sampled randomly, and a total of 609 questionnaires were returned. The questionnaire was translated into Korean as well as into 5 foreign languages (Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, English, and Khmer). A variety of methods were used for data gathering, such as direct visits by researchers, phone requests, mail-in questionnaires, using trained students, etc.; all questionnaires were collected between September and November 2012.

The average age of the survey subjects was 33.4 years old, with those in their 20s accounting for 40.4 percent, more than those in their 30s and 40s. High school graduates accounted for 49.1 percent and graduates of community college and higher were the second highest at 26.9 percent. Just over half, 54.3 percent, of respondents lived in urban areas, whereas only 45.7 percent resided in rural areas. For country of origin, at 27.8 percent, most of the respondents were from Vietnam, followed by the Philippines, Japan, China, ethnic Koreans in China, and the Chinese Han in descending order. For differences in age with spouse, 29.8 percent of respondents differed in age from their husbands by 11-15 years, followed by differences of 5-10 at 29.0 percent and more than 16 years at 24.8 percent; that is, there were considerable age differences between the husbands and wives in the study. Nearly two-thirds, 66.2 percent, of respondents did not live with their spouse's parents. Just over half, 52.8 percent, reported moderate incomes, and 33.2 percent reported insufficient incomes; more than 85 percent of the women reported their incomes to be less than moderate. Nearly half of the immigrant women had resided in Korea for 2-5 years.

2.3 Survey Tools

2.3.1 Acculturative Stress

In order to measure acculturative stress of immigrant women, this study used the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students, which was developed by¹⁸ and then translated and modified by¹⁹. The scale consists of a total of 36 items and 7 subscales. Perceived discrimination (8 items) measures bias and discrimination; homesickness (4 items), the longing for one's homeland and family; perceived hostility (5 items), the feeling of hostility from the community; anxiety (2 items), personal insecurity; cultural shock (3 items), the difficulty of

adapting to a new culture; guilt (2 items), feeling sorry for leaving one's family and friends in the mother country; other (12 items), language differences and social isolation; and moving (1 item). However, other and moving were excluded from the analysis because they held little meaning for the present study.

Each item is based on a 5-point Likert scale, and a higher score indicates greater acculturative stress. For reliability, the Cronbach's alpha for discrimination was 0.891; homesickness, 0.774; hostility, 0.846; anxiety, 0.641; cultural shock, 0.738; and guilt, 0.539; reliability for guilt was low because there are only 2 items.

2.3.2 Family-related Stress

To measure immigrant women's family relationships, this study utilized the 23-item family-related²⁰ created to measure the stress of wives based on the Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes by²¹ on a study by²². The sub-factors of family-related stress are husband-related stress (6 questions), including conversation with the husband, drinking, and differences of opinion; child-related stress (6 questions), including child education and child-rearing difficulties, stress related to in-laws (6 questions), including differences of opinion, and being compared with others; and economy-related stress (5 questions), including economic hardship and household expenses. Each question is scored on a 6-point Likert scale, with 0 points for "I have never experienced" and 5 points for "It is very serious"; a higher score means a higher degree of stress in each domain. For reliability, the Cronbach's α for husband-related stress was 0.807, 0.821 for child-related stress, 0.840 for in-law stress, and 0.585 for economic stress; the reliability of economic stress was somewhat low.

2.3.3 Hope

To measure the hopes of immigrant women, the study used the Korean Dispositional Hope Scale (K-DHS) that was invented by²³ and adapted by Choi and others²⁴ for the Korean context. The K-DHS is a 12-item Likert scale; four items assess agency thinking, four assess pathway thinking, and four are distracters. The items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1=definitely false to 4=definitely true, and a higher score indicates more. The Cronbach's α for agency thinking in the current study was 0.695, and that for pathway thinking was 0.689.

2.3.4 Well-being

For well-being, the study used a psychological well-being scale that was modified and supplemented by²⁵ based on²⁶ classification of well-being into positive and negative factors. Positive well-being includes past, present and future satisfaction, and there are 13 items; negative well-being includes alienation, frustration, cutting social relationships, and role loss, and there are 12 items; thus, the scale has a total of 25 items. Each item is based on a 5-point Likert scale, and higher scores indicate more positive or negative well-being. For reliability, the Cronbach's α for positive well-being was 0.862, and it was .896 for negative well-being.

2.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS PC+ Win. 21.0 and Amos 21.0. For the statistical analysis, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation analysis, mean comparison analysis, and structural equation modeling were applied.

3. Results

3.1 Correlation Analysis and Descriptive Statistics

To identify the correlations between the variables, this study conducted Pearson r correlation analysis, and the results are shown in Table 1. Acculturative stress and family-related stress had statistically significant negative correlations with the positive factors of well-being but positive correlations with the negative factors. Hope had a positive correlation with the positive factors of well-being but a negative correlation with the negative factors. More specifically, the correlation coefficients between the negative factors of well-being and acculturative stress ranged from 0.533 to 0.420, and those between the negative well-being factors and family-related stress were between 0.466 and 0.246. The correlation coefficients between the positive well-being factors and acculturative stress ranged from -0.527 to 0.344, and those between the positive factors and family-related stress were between -0.486 and 0.272. Moreover, the correlation coefficients between hope and the negative factor of well-being were between -0.346 and 0.337, indicating negative correlations. The correlation coefficients between hope and the positive well-being factors ranged between 0.545 and 0.433.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	1														
2	0.690**	1													
3	0.816**	0.629**	1												
4	0.702**	0.586**	0.713**	1											
5	0.769**	0.716**	0.657**	0.603**	1										
6	0.602**	0.568**	0.600**	0.518**	0.512**	1									
7	0.891**	0.722**	0.796**	0.751**	0.779**	0.629**	1								
8	0.429**	0.385**	0.435**	0.368**	0.353**	0.379**	0.436**	1							
9	0.240**	0.164**	0.269**	0.237**	0.181**	0.299**	0.257**	0.437**	1						
10	0.428**	0.395**	0.426**	0.389**	0.343**	0.332**	0.419**	0.605**	0.510**	1					
11	0.212**	0.148**	0.254**	0.214**	0.121**	0.188**	0.226**	0.538**	0.577**	0.530**	1				
12	-0.200**	-0.149**	-0.206**	-0.187**	-0.190**	-0.125**	-0.234**	-0.296**	-0.108**	-0.240**	-0.147**	1			
13	-0.148**	-0.076	-0.150**	-0.115**	-0.138**	-0.112**	-0.176**	-0.196**	-0.073	-0.204**	-0.061	0.672**	1		
14	0.499**	0.429**	0.552**	0.445**	0.453**	0.420**	0.533**	0.446**	0.246**	0.393**	0.249**	-0.346**	-0.337**	1	
15	-0.488**	-0.411**	-0.527**	-0.435**	-0.425**	-0.344**	-0.514**	-0.486**	-0.296**	-0.441**	-0.272**	0.545**	0.433**	-0.656**	1
M	2.744	3.074	2.499	2.381	2.897	2.440	2.703	2.588	2.269	2.330	2.509	3.282	3.450	2.373	3.307
SD	0.774	0.813	0.744	0.817	0.896	0.846	0.733	0.895	1.078	1.116	0.805	0.675	0.621	0.715	0.600
Skewness	0.133	0.084	0.361	0.385	0.131	0.376	0.118	0.063	-0.268	-0.239	0.055	-0.270	-0.282	0.096	0.007
Kurtosis	-0.370	-0.363	0.113	0.074	-0.484	-0.185	-0.263	-0.009	-0.212	-0.407	0.291	-0.019	0.434	-0.263	0.373

1. Discrimination 2. Homesick 3. Hostility 4. Anxiety 5. Cultural shock 6. Guilt 7. Other 8. Husband-related 9. Child-related 10. In-law-related 11. Economic 12. Agency thinking 13. Pathway thinking 14. Negative factors 15. Positive factors

**p<0.01

Table 2. a goodness of fit index

χ^2	df	CMIN/df	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
396.242***	84	4.717	0.936	0.936	0.949	0.078

***p<.001

Table 3. the paths of the modified model

Path between variables			B	β	S.E.	t
Acculturative stress	→	Hope	-0.115	-0.119	0.052	-2.239*
Family-related stress	→	Hope	-0.270	-0.25	0.063	-4.295***
Hope	→	Wellbeing	0.401	0.462	0.037	10.845***
Family-related stress	→	Wellbeing	-0.247	-0.263	0.041	-6.006***
Acculturative stress	→	Wellbeing	-0.344	-0.409	0.034	-10.008***

*p<.05, ***p<.001

Table 4. The mediating effects of hope

Path					Unstandardized estimate	Standardized estimate	95%CI (Bias-corrected bootstrap)
Acculturative stress	→	Hope	→	Wellbeing	-0.046	-0.055	p=0.057
Family-related stress		Hope		Wellbeing	-0.018	-0.0115	p=0.004

The mean values for acculturative stress, family-related stress, and negative well-being factors did not surpass the mid-point, although those for hope and the positive well-being factors did. The mean for homesickness was the highest among the sub-factors of acculturative stress, and husband-related stress was the highest among the sub-factors of family-related stress. For hope, the respondents demonstrated more pathway thinking than agency thinking, and for well-being, the means for the positive factors exceeded those for the negative factors. For skewness, all absolute values were lower than 3, and for kurtosis, all were lower than 7, thereby indicating that the requirements for a normal distribution were met²⁷.

3.2 Validating the Modified Model

To verify the research model, the following were conducted: confirmative factor analysis (measurement model), convergent validity evaluation, and research model analysis. As shown in Table 2, the criterion for goodness of fit of the measurement model is the χ^2 value, and this had no significant statistical difference. Both the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were above .9, and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was less than .1²⁸. The convergent validity of the measurement model was verified by confirming that the standardized factor loading was higher than .5, the z value was significant, and the average value extracted and concept reliability were 0.5 and 0.7, respectively²⁹.

This study validated the goodness of fit of the research model. With a χ^2 of 396.242 (df=84), there was a significant difference; that is, the model was not adequate. However, the χ^2 becomes meaningless when the number of cases exceeds 200²⁸. Moreover, CMIN/DF was 4.717, the normed fit index was 0.936, TLI was 0.936, CFI was 0.949, and RMSEA was 0.078. Therefore, this model was selected as the final model.

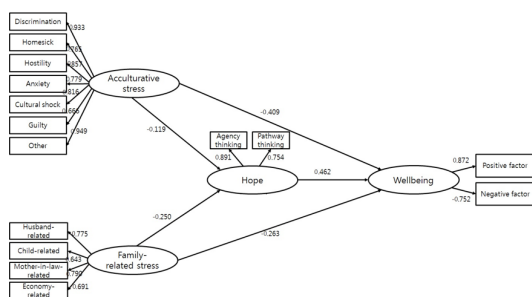


Figure 2. The path coefficients.

The validation results for each path coefficient are shown in Figure 2 and Table 3. Specifically, acculturative stress had a statistically significant negative impact on hope ($\beta=-0.119$, $p<0.05$) and well-being ($\beta=-0.409$, $p<0.001$), as did family-related stress (hope: $\beta=-0.250$, $p<0.001$; well-being: $\beta=-0.263$, $p<0.001$). Hope had a statistically significant positive impact on well-being ($\beta=0.462$, $p<0.001$).

3.3 Validating the Mediating Effects

To validate the mediating effects of hope on the relationships between acculturative stress, family-related stress and immigrant women's well-being, the bootstrap method was used, and the results are shown in Table 4. The indirect effect of hope on the relationship between acculturative stress and well-being was not significant ($p=.057$), but its indirect effect on well-being was significant at a confidence interval of 95 percent ($p=.004$). That is, the stress experienced directly by immigrant women in their family relationships had not only a negative impact on well-being but also an indirect impact through hope.

3. Discussion

This study was conducted to identify the structural relationships between the acculturative stress, family-related stress, hope, and well-being of immigrant women in Korea. The study conducted frequency, reliability, and correlation analysis, structural equation modeling, and bootstrapping. The study results are discussed below.

First, acculturative and family-related stress both had statistically significant negative correlations with the positive factors of well-being, whereas they had positive correlations with the negative factors. Hope had a positive correlation with the positive well-being factors but a negative correlation with the negative factors. That is, when the women reported lower degrees of acculturative and family-related stress, they reported more hope and positive factors of well-being. These findings indicate that hope is correlated to psychological health⁹. Moreover, the findings are consistent with the study results³⁰ that immigrant women's family-related stress had a negative correlation with life satisfaction.

Second, acculturative stress had a statistically significant negative impact on hope and well-being. This finding is consistent with previous results¹⁴⁻¹⁶ that found that acculturative stress had a negative impact on psych-

ological health. Family-related stress had a significantly negative impact on hope and well-being, and hope had a statistically significant positive impact on well-being. This finding is consistent with study results⁸ that found that hope was related to sympathy and psychological well-being.

Third, this study utilized the bootstrap method to validate the mediating effects of hope in the relationships between immigrant women's acculturative stress, family-related stress, and well-being. The results showed that hope did not have an indirect effect in the relationship between acculturative stress and well-being but that it did in the relationship between family-related stress and well-being.

The following recommendations can be made for a follow-up study based on the aforementioned findings. It was confirmed that hope in immigrant women was a critical variable in their well-being. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce their stress from adjusting to a new culture and new family members using hope promotion programs for them. Moreover, it is also imperative to actively intervene in diverse aspects in order to increase their well-being and overall living standards.

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