

# Analysis of cultural adaptation strategies of immigrant women working in Korea

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## Abstract

Interviews were conducted on 10 migrant women living in Seoul and surrounding areas to observe the working lives of migrant women in Korea. Their average age was 31 years (SD = 3.18 years) and their stay in Korea was 5.8 years (SD = 1.23 years), of which two of them acquired Korean citizenship. Their average monthly salary was 2.33 million won (SD=55.40). Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling method that introduced participants through acquaintances. Data collection was conducted through one-on-one in-depth interviews consisting of semi-structured questions. The main question was (1) “What cultural differences do you experience between immigrants and Koreans in your daily life?” (2) “How do you deal with those problems and what are your plans for the future?” Before the interview began, you explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and agreed to participate. Interviews for data collection were conducted for eight months from April 2021 to December 2021, and interviews consisting of three types of questions were conducted for each participant. The interview time was not limited, allowing participants to fully discuss their personal experiences at work, and each interview took about 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the participant. All interviews were recorded after being recorded, with each participant’s volume reaching approximately 5 to 8 sheets of A4 paper.

## Analysis of cultural adaptation strategies of immigrant women working in Korea

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the types of cultural adaptation of migrant women, focusing on the cultural conflicts and coping that immigrant women face in their daily lives and professional activities in Korean society. Data collection conducted semi-structured interviews on the daily lives and jobs of women who moved to Korea. The research method focused on categorization techniques was analyzed by applying a phenomenological approach. As a result of the study, 21 subcategories were reorganized to name 8 top categories consisting of identity, communication, social situation, conflict in daily life, conflict at work, adaptive, passive, and evasive. In addition, three paradigms consisting of cultural differences, experienced conflicts, and coping types were constructed. In the discussion session, policy directions were presented focusing on adaptation, and institutional devices were presented to overcome cultural conflicts.

Key-words: migrant women, multiculturalization, phenomenology, cultural adaptation, and coping types

Modern Korean society is changing into a multicultural society composed of people from various cultural backgrounds as the number of workers from third-world countries and transnational marriage immigrants increases in Korea (Hundt, 2016; Lim, 2020). Among them, the settlement problem of female residents implies more than the labor force (Ghazarian, 2018; Hundt, 2016; Yi, 2016). It varies depending on the purpose of stay of female immigrants staying in Korea. Among them, long-term residents exclude short-term visits such as tourism (Hundt, 2016; Hunt, 2020; Walton, 2020).

Looking at it, there are migrant workers, married migrant women, compatriots of foreign nationality, and international students (Ghazarian, 2018; Jang & Kim, 2018; Kim, 2018). Among them, migrant workers are foreign workers who do not have Korean nationality and work for wages at workplaces, and can be classified as non-professional work visas, professional work visas, and unregistered migrant workers according to the type of visa (Ra, Huh, Finch, & Cho, 2019; Walton, 2020). Mainly, workers from Asian countries who have entered the country to solve the shortage of domestic labor are representative, and overseas Koreans such as ethnic Koreans are also a majority. Married migrant women are women who have acquired Korean nationality through marriage and are a unique phenomenon that appears in Korean society. As of 2021, more than 130,000 women are married immigrants, accounting for more than 5% of all immigrants (Chang, 2019). Unlike foreign workers or married immigrants, North Korean defectors can take Korean citizenship at the same time as they enter the country, which is somewhat different from the situation faced by ordinary migrant women (Chang, 2019; Lee & Park, 2018; Titzmann & Gniewosz, 2018).

However, as migrant women generally flow into Korean society, interest in their social adaptation is increasing, and it can be an important layer to build a key clue necessary for multicultural policies of Korean society in the future (Chang, 2019; Walton, Harris, & Iwabuchi, 2020; Ward, Kim, Karl, Epstein, & Park, 2020). And already, with the increase in domestic migration of workers from third world countries and transnational marriage immigrants, modern Korean society is transforming into a multicultural society composed of people from various cultural backgrounds. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has already defined Korea as a multi-ethnic society in August 2007 (Yi, 2016). Because of these changes, Korean society has faced a new problem of conflict and discrimination between ethnic groups. One of the immigrant groups involved in such matters is female immigration. This is because female immigrants do not mean simple labor. Compared to men, women show an overwhelmingly high rate of immigration for marriage (Lee & Jung, 2012). In addition, in terms of being greatly influenced by social adaptation devices, the social adaptation phenomenon of migrant women is an important reason to receive great attention.

The problem is that allowing female immigrants to enter the country does not guarantee them an adaptable daily life or work life (Kim, 2018; Ra et al., 2019). The reality is that they are experiencing various types of difficulties and social discrimination in the process of adapting to Korean society even after entering the country. Most of their adaptation difficulties are often problems of adaptation to personal situations, and may otherwise begin with the socio-cultural stereotype of immigrants remaining in Korean society (Jang & Kim, 2018; Kim, 2018; Lee & Park, 2018; Yi, 2016).

Given that there is social discrimination against female immigrants, many studies tend to pay attention to the ability of female immigrants to assimilate as a way to solve these sociocultural conflict problems they face (Lee & Jung, 2012). In other words, it focused on the aspect of acceptance of mainstream culture as a response to the cultural shock experienced by women during the immigration process of residents (Kang, 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Lee & Park, 2018). In this way, the position of viewing adaptation to Korean society as a fairy tale in Korean mainstream culture needs to examine the facts that immigrants can sacrifice various capabilities (Lim, 2020; Oh, 2020; Stolz, 2020; Walton, 2020).

To overcome these limitations, it is necessary to view cultural adaptation as an interaction between mainstream culture and immigrants' culture (Berry, 1997; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). This perspective is a common point that appears in various cultures that have already experienced multiculturalization for a long time. For example, Berry (1997) assumed the cultural diversity of immigrants within the mainstream society to maintain their identity (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). He classified cultural adaptation strategies as integration, assimilation, separation, and alienation according to the combination

of immigrants maintaining their original culture and embracing mainstream society.

The interactive cultural model developed by Bourhis, Mose, Perreault, and Seecal (1977) emphasized that the cultural adaptation of certain immigrants was the result of interactions with mainstream groups in native cultures (Bourhis et al., 1997; Lee & Jung, 2012; Sam & Berry, 2010). Several studies have noted that the cultural adaptation experienced by immigrants is a result of the interaction between the original culture of immigrants and the native culture (Berry, 1997; Bourhis et al., 1997; Ghazarian, 2018; Oh, 2020; Sam & Berry, 2010; Shrikant, 2018; Titzmann & Gniewosz, 2018; Walton et al., 2020). Therefore, the researchers of this study judge that it is important to consider the characteristics of the two cultures to properly explain the many adaptive interventions experienced by female migrants in the situation of daily life or vocational activities in the process of settling in Korea (Jinhee, 2019; Kang, 2021).

Korea has long been characterized as a single-ethnic country (J. Kim et al., 2020). However, in modern times, Korean society has seen an increasing number of cases of different ethnic groups entering the country due to the atmosphere of the global village era. In particular, the case of women immigrating to Korea for marriage has become a very remarkable change in culture, and it can be said that great interest has now been formed in the adaptation process and reality of women who have come to Korea for immigration purposes (S. K. Lee, 2018; Y. Lee & Park, 2018; Lim, 2020; Shrikant, 2018).

In this atmosphere, Koreans are reminded of the fact that they still define themselves as the characteristics of a single person (Chang, 2019; Heim & Kohrt, 2019). The current trend of multiculturalization in Korea cannot be ignored, and at the same time, it is time for each other to make efforts to form a positive aspect of interaction with the already introduced relationship with migrants (Hundt, 2016; Ward et al., 2020). Native Koreans have not smoothly accepted this trend, but local and government organizations are now actively leading the systems necessary for multiculturalization.

Meanwhile, the majority of female immigrants who move to Korea choose to move to Korea for economic activities. It can be said that women who immigrate to Korea from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines have some economic goals. However, migrant women living in Korea experience that their goals are not easily achieved simply by participating in economic activities (Jang & Kim, 2018). In particular, they realize that cultural adaptation in Korea should come first due to cynical treatment or discrimination caused by cultural differences. This is the same for native Koreans. From the perspective of native Koreans, they cannot be rejected unconditionally (Jang & Kim, 2018; Oh, 2020; Ra et al., 2019). This is because many people got married in Korea, so now a new relationship has been formed with the concept of family, and an atmosphere in which no one can resist this new relationship has been created.

However, it can be said that the dilemma that immigrants still have about their identity remains (Kang, 2021; Ward et al., 2020). If so, it is a very important problem to identify the characteristics of migrant women's experiences that appear in Korea now. Analyzing the problems of self-identity, cultural conflict, and cultural adaptation of migrant women through daily life and professional activities, their coping behavior in Korea will greatly help collect appropriate systems for multiculturalization in the future.

As has been observed so far, both Korean culture and their culture must be fully considered to understand the adaptation of female immigrants to Korea (Hundt, 2016; Kim, 2018; Lee & Jung, 2012). However, existing studies have limitations in that they try to understand adaptation by focusing on Korean culture. For example, identity studies explain identity in a way that immigrants can assimilate into Korean culture as quickly as possible rather than emphasizing their nationality or ethnic identity more. Studies dealing with communication also evaluate based on Korean in finding ways to resolve differences between vocabulary and grammar. In other words, the dominant characteristic of recognizing Korea's multiculturalism is that it is most adaptable to communicate and communicate like Koreans (Chang, 2019; Heim & Kohrt, 2019). In addition, most studies dealing with cultural differences view immigrant adaptation as a fairy tale to mainstream culture and strongly support the perception that the acceptance of Korean culture has a great influence on their adaptation.

There are several studies dealing with immigrant life from the mutual perspective of the two cultures (Hunt,

2020; Jinhee, 2019; Lim, 2020). However, there is virtually a lack of research that systematically examines the cultural differences and adaptive realities experienced by immigrant women who immigrate to Korea in daily life and professional scenes from the mutual perspective of the two cultures. Considering that immigrant women have socio-cultural conflicts at the same time in their daily lives as well as in their work lives, past general research results on immigrants have limitations in understanding their cultural adaptations and the difficulties they face. These studies cannot provide information on how the dual identity of immigrant women works in the job field, how they cope with cultural differences, and what efforts they make to overcome difficulties caused by language differences.

Furthermore, several studies reveal that not everyone adapts in the same way even in the same situation (Berry, 1997; Kim, 2018). Even if the various cultural differences and adaptation difficulties faced by immigrant women are similar, there may be individual differences in how they cope with situations in which they have to adapt culturally. Surveys of such adaptations can be of great significance in that they provide useful information on successful cultural adaptations (Chang, 2019). Therefore, in consideration of these points, this study attempts to explore the cultural conflict experiences of female immigrants and their response strategies. In addition, by identifying the types of adaptation and maladjustment, the characteristics to be reflected in the social institutional aspect will be analyzed.

## Method

### Sources of data

Interviews were conducted on 10 migrant women living in Seoul and surrounding areas to observe the working lives of migrant women in Korea. As can be seen in Table 1, their average age was 31 years ( $SD = 3.18$  years) and their stay in Korea was 5.8 years ( $SD = 1.23$  years), of which two of them acquired Korean citizenship. Their average monthly salary was 2.33 million won ( $SD=55.40$ ). Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling method that introduced participants through acquaintances. Data collection was conducted through one-on-one in-depth interviews consisting of semi-structured questions. The main question was (1) "What cultural differences do you experience between immigrants and Koreans in your daily life?" (2) "How do you deal with those problems and what are your plans for the future?" Before the interview began, you explained the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and agreed to participate. Interviews for data collection were conducted for eight months from April 2021 to December 2021, and interviews consisting of three types of questions were conducted for each participant. The interview time was not limited, allowing participants to fully discuss their personal experiences at work, and each interview took about 30 minutes to 2 hours depending on the participant. All interviews were recorded after being recorded, with each participant's volume reaching approximately 5 to 8 sheets of A4 paper.

pyo 1 Demographic data of the research participants

No	Native	Marital Status	Education	Age	Job	Monthly Pay (1,000\$)	Length of Stay
1	China	Married	College	28	Accounting	2.1	6
2	China	Married	College	32	Sales Work	2.2	8
3	China	Single	High School	27	waitress	1.6	5
4	Vietnam	Single	College	28	Sales Work	1.9	5
5	Philippines	Married	High School	27	dealership	2.3	5
6	China	Divorced	High School	33	dealership	2.4	5
7	Vietnam	Married	Graduate School	31	Instructor	3.1	5
8	Vietnam	Married	High School	35	waitress	1.7	8
9	Philippines	Married	University	35	governess	2.8	6
10	Japan	Married	College	33	dealership	3.2	5

### Data Analysis

The qualitative data gained through the interviews were analyzed using the phenomenological analysis method of Colaizzi (1978). As Colaizzi (1978) emphasized, we placed the focus of the study on understanding the experiences of the immigrant as they are (Stolz, 2020). The procedure for data analysis was as follows. First, all transcribed verbatim records were read several times until an overall sense was made by identifying with the participants. Second, vivid experiences reported by the immigrant women and directly associated significant phrases or sentences were deducted into meaning units from each of the verbatim records. Third, meaning units were grouped into subcategories and then the subcategories into categories.

## Results

The 10 verbatim records gained from the interviews were analyzed by two doctoral researchers and 181 significant statements or sentences were deducted. The statements or sentences were grouped into 21 subcategories, which were then grouped again into 8 categories. As can be seen in Table 2, cultural differences stem from identity, communication, and social characteristics. The conflict experiences appeared in daily life and work. Also, coping types appeared in the three types Adoptive, Passive, and Avoiding. Based on these results, this section will present cultural differences and experienced conflicts resulting from such differences and then it will describe the differences among the three coping types.

Table 2. Phenomenological analysis results

Paradigm	Categories	Subcategories
cultural differences	identity	"the nationality", "the differences in ethnicity"
	communication	"heterogeneity of language use", "difficulty in bilingualism", "difference in sy
	social situation	"interpersonal customs", "perspective on work", "social system"
experienced conflicts	conflict in everyday life	"hardships of life", "institutional discrimination", "interpersonal alienation"
	conflict at work	"poor working conditions", "hard work", "work discrimination"
coping types	adaptive	"self-effort", "Improving interpersonal communication", "cultural understand
	passive	"seeking material rewards", "Ignoring psychological pain"
	evasive	"renunciation of employment", "regret everyday life"

## Cultural Differences

### identity

Most of the participants in this study showed a tendency to explain their identities divided into the two dimensions of nationality and ethnicity. Instead of a single perception that they are Korean, many of them referred to a dual identity of foreigners living in Korea. Also, many of them sensed difficulty and discrimination in adapting to Korean society due to such dual identities. In particular, it was found that the participants experienced a confused feeling about their ethnic identity. So some participants referred to themselves as Chinese during the interview process and for some of them, the fact that their families remained in China was an important condition for defining their state identity. However, this didn't mean they received treatment as Chinese people and they were aware of discrimination as a minority group.

People around me treat me as a foreigner, a Chinese living in Korea. Some people think of me as a Korean, but most people think of me as a foreigner. (participant 6) I have never been treated well in Vietnam. For example, even when taking a certification exam, there are restrictions on the identity system. Many policies make the nobility more comfortable or superior. Politicians say they will create a system for the common people, but what they say is a lie. However, my situation is similar in Korea as well. (participant 7)

At the same time, almost all participants considered themselves Korean. This national identity may be the result of receiving history education at a Korean cultural center or the fact that one's children have grown up in Korea and embraced it. Participants also noted that they wanted to maintain cultural homogeneity with Koreans. For this purpose, he emphasized the importance of respect for each other for all Koreans, including myself and other immigrants in Korea.

Ummm. Even though they have different roots, they are all Korean now. (omitted) If you meet South Koreans, you can say 'we are all Korean'. It's not just Koreans. When I meet other migrants, I think I can say, 'We are Koreans'. Because I was born in China, I want to say that my ethnicity is Chinese, but I want to say that my country is Korea, no matter what city I live in. (participant 3) Currently, the immigrant population is growing and many immigrant schools have disappeared. And it seems that the natives living in Korea are still wary of migrants. In particular, most migrants like us live in or around large cities but feel very alienated because of Korea's single ethnicity. (participant 9)

It was found that migrant women feel sorry for being classified as foreigners in society, even though they consider themselves to be like Koreans. So they pointed out that they want to enjoy various benefits as Koreans, but they are experiencing the reality of living within the limits of migrants. Some participants also report experiences of being ill-treated because of their immigrant status.

When my friends go to Korea, they often say that there is a lot of discrimination against immigrants, but I think that's the case. I seldom thought of that while living in Japan, but living here often stimulates cultural emotions. In particular, it was a very unpleasant experience for me to swear in Japanese just because I was a migrant from Japan. (participant 10)

## Communication

Since immigrant women are new to Korean, it takes some time for them to speak Korean well. And in real life, they were experiencing many linguistic difficulties in terms of intonation and word meaning that were different from their native language. In general, most migrant women reported no major difficulties in basic language skills necessary for communication. However, since most of the participants learned Korean at an immigrant school for a short period, this linguistic problem became a core confusion factor.

It's naturally easy for my husband to order sashimi or steak at a Korean restaurant, but I don't know the proper words yet. It's gotten a little better these days, but it's still difficult to order in Korean. (participant 10)

On the other hand, it was found that migrants experience a lot of confusion unless they use the correct words in the process of communicating with other people. In particular, it was found that communication was very difficult due to the custom of speaking Korean oppositely. In addition, it was emphasized that the participants had difficulty translating into their native country and at the same time had difficulties communicating properly with others due to the recent presence of many foreign words in Korea and the sudden formation of new words.

English and loanwords are difficult. When I went to school, we did not learn English. Since a lot of English is used here when I work, it was uncomfortable because I cannot understand and I cannot follow words that I have not heard before. Words that I hear for the first time are difficult. (participant 1) I served at a restaurant. It was a Western-style restaurant where they serve steak, juice, and cocktails. At first, you don't know anything. The different kinds of steak and spaghetti were things I hadn't heard of often in China and there, it's all written in Chinese. (Omitted) But experiencing it here, 'Wow, what do I do with all these foreign words?' was the biggest problem. (participant 3)

In addition, they used code-switching in verbal communication. For example, while they tried to learn the parts of Korean that they don't know while at work in Korea, some of them used their mother tongue in other daily situations. Also, they experienced times when their way of speaking, different from that of Koreans, provided a reason for discrimination and some would receive education in the Korean language to better adapt to Korean life.

I learned Korean again for about two months in China but it wasn't easy since I keep using Chinese at home. So I watched Korean dramas when I was in China. That was when I started to watch dramas. From 2004. I used Chinese at home, too. My grandfather used Chinese, too since he works as a government employee. I always spoke in Chinese since I had to socially. When I first started to learn the language I wondered 'Why I am here?' Not in my classes but when I was attending a Korean language academy. (participant 1) I

sometimes use Vietnamese when it is more comfortable. When I used Vietnamese, people next to me would tell me not to and I thought ‘what’s the matter if a Vietnamese person uses Vietnamese but as I continue to live here I understand why. (participant 4)

### **Social situation**

Immigrant women were experiencing cultural differences in Korea in terms of political and economic aspects, especially in terms of socioeconomic difficulties and discrimination. In terms of politics, China and Vietnam aim for socialism, and Korea aims for individualism. However, not many participants talked about political ideology or viewed it as a cause of difficulty in adapting to Korea. On the other hand, more attention was paid to the fact that the labor standards in the socialist system were different from those in Korean society.

Koreans and Chinese are different because China is originally a communist country. So some people who don’t work can get a higher salary than the people who work. So in China, if you’re hired by a company, it’s like being a civil servant. A person can go to the office and drink tea and read newspapers all day long and get paid. Individualism is too strong in Korea. However, it seems to have its pros and cons. (participant 2)

### **Experienced conflicts**

#### **conflict in everyday life**

The aspect in which immigrant women experience the most cultural differences from Korea and associated difficulties is the economic aspect. The reason for their decision to come to Korea is basically because Korea is wealthier economically and this can be seen as an acknowledgment that Korea is wealthier than their country economically. Even, in reality, it has been revealed that most immigrant people think that Korea is an easier place to earn money than their country.

My family and friends were all very happy when I said that I would go to Korea because Korea is richer and has a better image than China. But when I came here, it was hard to live. Although they make more money in their daily lives than in China, they tend to live economically difficult lives in Korea because they have to reduce their living costs. (participant 6) Korea came to Korea to raise money for its two sons’ education because it is freer and easier to make money than Vietnam. Prices in Vietnam have risen more than before, and private education costs are as high as in Korea. That’s why Vietnamese people are coming to Korea. Making money in Korea is much better than making money in Vietnam. That’s why I’m here. (participant 8)

It was found that immigrant women lived in Korea and experienced institutional discrimination or interpersonal alienation. They especially experienced the tendency and cultural characteristics of Koreans who care about their age in the workplace, and some participants were struggling with the situation where they were alienated.

In Korea, people care a lot about their age. It seems like you’re trying to decide on a relationship by asking your age all of a sudden even though you’re doing a small job. To be honest, I think it depends on the position you work for rather than your age. Anyway, I was a little older at first, so I benefited from this culture (participant 2) I think Koreans ignore Filipinos. When I buy things at the store, I speak informally, and even when I talk to Korean people, they keep a distance. So I was a little lonely. But now I feel a little better after seeing you often. Of course, I am indeed more lonely in Korea now than when I was in the Philippines. (participant 9)

#### **conflict at work**

Immigrant women experience various cultural differences and discrimination at work while doing their jobs. They especially made references to how most of them work in 3D industries which Koreans avoid because they are foreign laborers. Also, Koreans are relatively more intensive than immigrant people and think of long work hours as natural but this gave immigrant women a hard time.

I work from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. I am not the only one. There aren’t many immigrants who come here and

do good things. I work in the 3D industry doing so-called hard and dirty work. For example, young people work in companies, men work in the field, more educated people work in places like instructors and trading companies, and women in their 40s and 50s work as housekeepers, restaurants, etc. (participant 2) I worked as an accountant at a travel agency in the Philippines, and the working hours were shorter than here, about 8 hours. Because I can have my own time outside of work, I was able to meet my friends and have a good time. However, working life in Korea is not like that. My most dissatisfaction is that I am physically very tired and do not have time to be alone because I work almost 12 hours a day or more. (participant 5)

In addition, discrimination is more demanding for women who immigrate from the same workplace or easier for Koreans. Korean workers sometimes disparaged their behavior. In severe participants, migrant women were not paid in full or at all even if their working hours were extended.

There are participants where Korean customers treat me too recklessly or look down on me because I'm not good at talking when I work. At times like that, I feel disgusted, and when I think about paying other Korean employees but delaying me, the boss is annoyed and hates Korea. (participant 3) Now I work at a restaurant, but there are many difficulties and low salaries. Wages are lower than Koreans. I sometimes get scolded for eating while working in a restaurant. Even if he ate the same amount as Koreans, he said, "Did you starve like a beggar in Vietnam?" (participant 8)

## Coping Types

There were differences in the ways that the participants dealt with the cultural differences and difficulties and discriminations associated with adapting culturally which have been examined so far. The three different types were Active, Passive, and Evasive.

### Adaptive-type

Participants in this study are classified as adaptive (participants 5, 7, and 9) and are generally well adapted to the Korean cultural situation. This type showed the characteristics of understanding oneself, using dominant strategies in interaction with others, and showing an active coping style for Korean culture. Specifically, there was a tendency to boldly reveal that he was an immigrant, saying that he found a job that was different from Koreans and could show his talent at work. The fact that they did not hide the fact that they were immigrants formed a framework of understanding, which can be said to be a confidence structure in their relationship with Koreans. Most unique was that they adapted to Korea while maintaining their own culture to some extent.

When I was a Korean language instructor at OO, I liked to be a 'foreigner'. OO was in the countryside at that time, and there were not many Korean language instructors, so I think it was my first time being a foreign instructor. (Somewhere) There was no particular conflict because my in-laws welcomed me as an immigrant to communicate effectively with them. Rather, at first, people around me felt more awkward about me acting like a Korean, but now I seem to be very interested in showing the characteristics of Vietnam and Korea at the same time. (participant 7) Since I lived in the Philippines, I naturally think, 'I am a foreigner, I am a Filipino'. I want to compare the fact that the Philippines is my birth mother and Korea is my mother who raised me. My ethnic identity is that the blood flowing through my body is Filipino, and as I live here with my family, I feel like my cultural hometown is here in Korea. So I am Korean. And I don't abandon Philippine culture. It is rather easier to adapt to Korea to match with Korea to some extent, and I think Koreans are more comfortable when dealing with me. (participant 9)

The biggest feature of adaptive immigrant women is that they are at least not trying to get out of their situation or change direction. They actively faced their situation, formed close relationships with colleagues, or tried to adapt to the social system. In other words, all of them showed a strong desire to dominantly solve their problems and naturally become more skilled in the adaptation process.

While sending her daughter to a daycare center, she received about 400,000 won in childcare fees along with a free health examination service. The daughter's childcare education cost was 400,000 won per month, but the financial burden was halved with government support. I went to the welfare center with my Filipino friend,



but he doesn't want to go because he can't speak Korean well. However, I asked around Korean people and eventually got the benefit of the support fee. (participant 9) I can feel a lot of cultural differences when I come here and experience them myself. Whenever I start working somewhere and get close to older women I work with, I say, "I've lived in Iron since I was young, so please understand if I say something inappropriate because of cultural differences." In particular, if it seems to be a problem due to cultural differences with Koreans, the situation will change very well if I ask for understanding first and come forward. (participant 10)

### Passive-type

Passive-type participants (participants 1, 3, 6, and 8) tend to choose a bypass coping strategy due to various conflicts caused by cultural differences. In other words, due to the lack of ability to cope with the situation, there was a tendency to passively solve problems at the individual level, such as taking the situation or paying attention only to making money. If these types of participants experienced being frustrated or treated unfairly by their peers, they preferred to take the situation alone instead of actively solving the problem. And they were found to prefer mood-changing behavior to find emotional comfort, and some participants showed self-criticism.

Sometimes we think of ourselves as foreigners. Therefore, even if you have an unfair experience, you can't bring it up and just endure it. It's not solved through conversation, just endure it. Koreans lack an understanding of migrants and our migrants should have tried, but they seem to have failed to do so. I'm not good enough either. To adapt to Korean life, I should have learned it quickly, but I couldn't. I feel pretty guilty about that. Oh! And when I'm angry, I sometimes go to the bathroom, sigh, hold it in, and say to myself, "Let's hang in there!" (participant 3)

Most of these types of immigrants come to Korea to make money, so in most conflict situations, they choose to endure to achieve that goal. As a result, some people plan to return to their countries after achieving their savings goals.

To be honest, I work in Korea because I can get good food and a lot of money compared to where I lived. But I had a lot of thoughts during my divorce, and I don't want to settle down here unless I get married. If I don't get married, there's no reason to be in Korea. If possible, I will make money and go back to my country. (participant 6)

### Evasive-type

evasive-type participants (participants 2, 4, and 10) were found to prefer a strategy to avoid conflicts without directly resolving them. In particular, it was found that they tend to be uncertain about their goals over time and confused about what to pursue. In the workplace, they generally had little work experience, so they tended to change jobs naturally without being able to adapt due to a lack of work skills. In addition, they tended to settle for the current barren situation rather than solve their problems constructively.

I've tried to find a good job by changing jobs over the years. But I think that's it. I've worked part-time at a convenience store, but I couldn't find anything better. The longest time I worked was a year and a half. I want to stop now. Work and this life are so boring to me. I don't think I can find what I want to do right now. So I think it's a very confusing time for me right now. I don't know what I want to do or what I can do for several years already. (participant 2)

It was found that they regretted the lives of those who had not lived in harmony with many people in Korea. And now, it seems that he has fulfilled his will to overcome the difficulties of reality. Also, they were found to have a position to solve their problems by marrying a Korean or returning to their country quickly.

I'm tired now. I will go back to Vietnam and I have no intention of coming to Korea after that. I've never grown attached to my job, and I've only been disappointed because I suffered so much in my work life. I'm still under stress. I don't want to stay here another day. I don't know if I get married, but I want to go back to Vietnam quickly because I feel stuffy now. (participant 4)

## Discussion

This study is of important value in that it explores various cultural differences experienced by migrant women who have migrated to Korea and reveals the difficulties, discrimination experiences, and the types of coping they show in such situations within the actual socio-cultural context. In particular, it is considered to have practical value in that it provides policy information necessary for multicultural phenomena in Korean society.

In this study, through phenomenological research methods, experiences related to cultural conflicts experienced by immigrant women with Korean jobs were explored, and three types of adaptation were derived for them to cope with their problems. As a result, it was found that conflicts and discrimination were experienced in various aspects such as identity, communication, social situation, daily life, work, etc. In addition, as a result of analyzing the coping types of immigrant women, adaptive, passive, and evasive types were found. These findings are discussed in more detail in this section.

Cultural differences reported by female immigrants while working in Korea were similar to those reported in previous studies on immigrants (Heo & Kim, 2019; Kim, 2018; Ra et al., 2019). However, the results of this study showed that the selective application strategy of Korean culture had a greater influence on adaptation than the one-sided assimilation of mainstream culture proposed by existing studies. In addition, as previous studies have shown, the characteristics that immigrant women should have two identities that migrants and natives should have were reflected (Kang, 2021; Lee et al., 2021). Instead of choosing between the two groups, they were found to selectively share each identity according to their situation and context.

In particular, although linguistic communication was not easy for adaptive participants, they used specific languages to adequately demonstrate their identity in a given cultural situation. The results of these studies differ slightly from previous studies, and it was found that for them to settle well in Korean society, a communication method that combines two identities must be developed.

Participants experienced cultural differences in political ideology and economic systems. Most of the participants were aware of the realistic situation that they could only work in poor jobs such as the 3D job field due to the difference in economic level with Korea (Kim et al., 2022). In particular, it was recognized that labor regulations such as working hours and wages were very different between the two cultures. In terms of interpersonal relationships, it was found that they experienced a cultural shock in that Korean culture showed more hierarchical and authoritative characteristics. Under these circumstances, they did not unconditionally favor the Korean economic system and forcing them to unilaterally assimilate into it certainly did not improve their adaptability.

Immigrant women expect some positive treatment from Korean society under the consciousness that Koreans are of the same nationality as themselves, but in the reality of Korean society, they experience relatively great shock because they treat them as other groups. In this regard, if Korean society wants to accept them as equal members and create a harmonious society, various measures are needed to reduce prejudice and discrimination against them from native Koreans and institutional issues must be reformed.

In this way, immigrant women experience various difficulties and discrimination while living in Korean society, and among them, there were generally types that could not adapt. For example, passive or evasive type immigrant women often lost their original purpose while living in Korean society. In terms of coping methods, they use strategies in a somewhat material-seeking manner, unlike active coping methods to escape difficulties and discrimination.

On the other hand, adaptive immigrant women were showing an attitude of acknowledging the cultural differences they faced, and the resulting conflicts were resolved constructively. They actively understood and accepted Korean culture and lived their lives at the same time. These results can be said to show the need for immigrant women to dominantly solve their problems to live a properly adapted life in Korea. This coping method can be said to be a characteristic that most immigrants require to adapt to mainstream culture.

In addition, Korean society should prepare a cultural adaptation system that reflects their cultural charac-

teristics to help multicultural immigrants adapt (Chang, 2019; Kim et al., 2022; Ward et al., 2020). For example, some parts of Korea have developed and implemented two-way cultural exchange programs to help immigrant women adapt to their marriage. If after-school programs for the education of children from multicultural families and foreign workers are also carried out in this way, they must be developed and implemented for "passive" and "evasive" immigrant women in the future.

Based on these results, it is desirable to construct a program that can develop a kind of adaptability shown by adaptive women (Kim et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2021). First, it is important to create a social atmosphere in which immigrant women can accept and reveal their identity as immigrants. This can sometimes lead to inappropriate discrimination, but hiding their identity is not the best way to eliminate discrimination. Instead, a program is needed to properly recognize the advantages and disadvantages of dual identity and to help them come up with active solutions in a given situation.

Second, there is a need for a program to help develop code necessary for mutual communication. Immigrant women use code that intersects two modules of their native language and Korean language in their language use. These native/Korean codes work as a positive adaptation tool, but they can also worsen interpersonal relationships. Therefore, in this study, 'passive' and 'evasive' immigrant women tended to separate and grasp relationships with Koreans based on their mother tongue/Korean codes, while 'adaptive' female immigrants emphasized codes that could unite people or workplace characteristics instead of their mother tongue/Korean codes. Therefore, it is necessary to help them develop communication codes suitable for a particular situation.

Third, for immigrant women to overcome cultural differences, they must go through the process of taking the lead in solving their problems and gaining the will to be skilled. Given the stable nature of culture, cultural adaptation is not just a matter of choice at the moment, but a skill that forms within long-term, stable patterns of behavior (Oh, 2020; Walton, 2020; Ward et al., 2020). Accordingly, immigrant women need to experience the process of strengthening their willingness to take the lead in solving their problems and increasing their adaptability while working in Korean society. In particular, to implement a system that can support their cultural adaptation, there is an urgent problem that native Koreans must first accept migrants socially and accept them as the same members. Accordingly, it is necessary to develop each communication support program necessary for migrants and natives.

Overall, the 10 immigrant women who participated in the study had somewhat diverse jobs, and most women in blue-collar jobs were found to have relatively many grievances. In contrast, both participants with a teacher's job were adapting to Korean society quite well. It is judged that this may be due to the nature of their job. Thus, if future studies examine differences in adaptation according to occupations or the diversity of types of adaptation within occupations, such studies can contribute to understanding the various effects of occupations on cultural adaptation and individual differences.

In addition, although it was excluded at the request of the participants in this study, some migrant women were suffering from sexual harassment in the workplace due to their sexual status as women. In the Korean society where gender discrimination against women is prevalent, immigrant women were no exception. The gender discrimination experienced by immigrant women, who have a position as a minority group in Korean society, is even more serious in that it is closely related to their poor civil rights situation. Therefore, measures to solve these problems quickly need to be developed and carried out at the social level.

Furthermore, it is necessary to extensively study behavioral strategies in which migrants with various characteristics, such as Korean diaspora subjects, foreign workers, and international students living in Korea, adapt to Korean society (Chang, 2019; Heim & Kohrt, 2019; Shrikant, 2018). Furthermore, to understand multiculturalism, which will be the cornerstone of building a more ideal society in a Korean society that is changing into a multicultural society, research at the national level is needed and based on this movement, it is necessary to establish an appropriate social system and prepare policies.

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