

Research Brief

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Back to the Mother's Homeland for Studying: Push, Pull and Conditional Factors for Children of Foreign Women in South Korea

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During the past three decades, South Korea has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of children from multicultural families, reaching 276 thousand children in 2020. Due to the high education fever in South Korea, most foreign parents experience difficulties in carrying out supporting activities for their kid's education. A tough educational environment in Korean society makes foreign women consider sending children to their homeland for studying. This study proposes a conceptual scheme that the motherland's cultural identity serves as a pull factor, while the perception of discrimination functions as a push factor, in deciding whether to send children to their mother's homeland for studying. Of special interest is to examine the conditional effects of the language spoken in the mother's homeland. A proposition on the socioeconomic selectivity of studying abroad is also adopted in this study.

Conceptual framework

Pull factor:

Immigrants with a strong motherland's cultural identity tend to have distinctive intentions for transnational economic/ educational activities or return migration.

Push factor:

The marginalization of immigrants, adjustment difficulties, and a strong perception of discrimination tend to motivate foreign women to make plans for children's education in their homeland.

Conditional factor:

Global language education is perceived as an instrument, which would help their children to get a prestigious occupation, power, and privilege. So many foreign women from English or Chinese-speaking countries want their children to retain their native language and culture. Thus, the push-pull dynamics are likely to vary according to the language spoken in the mother's homeland.



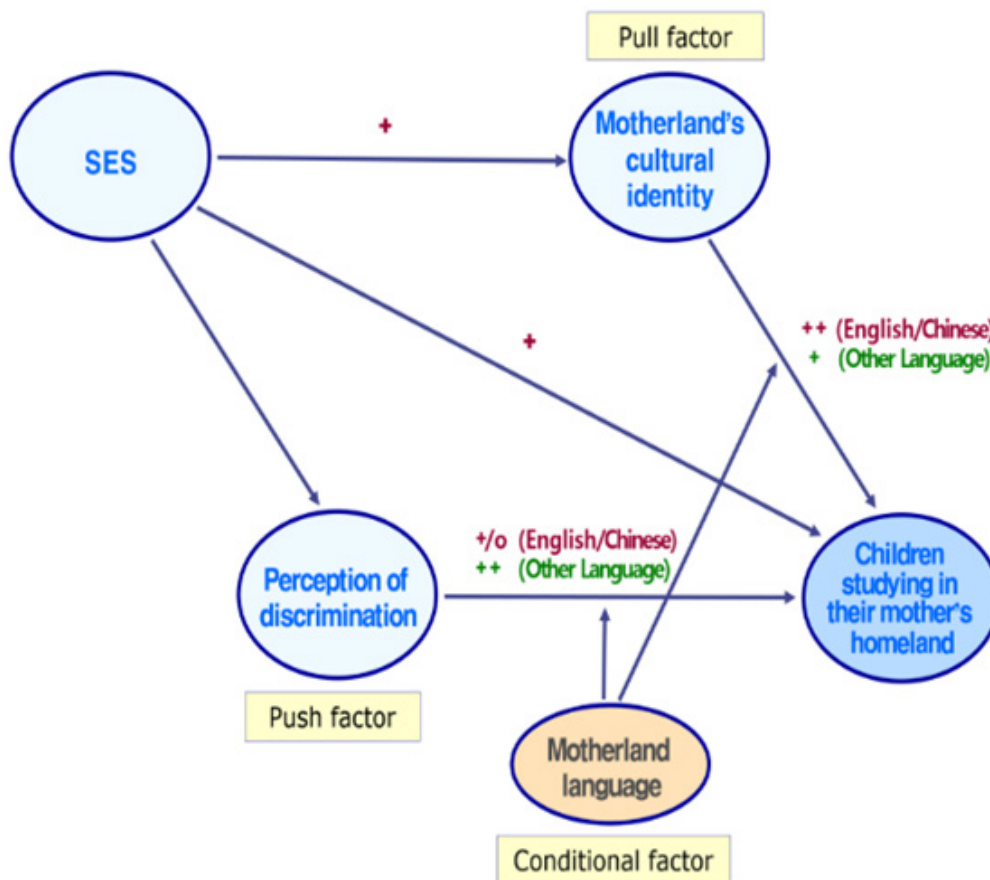
Hypotheses

1. High SES is likely to raise the level of the motherland's cultural identity and the probability of children studying in their mother's homeland.
2. The propensity to send children back to the mother's homeland for studying is likely to rise substantially among foreign women with high levels of the motherland's cultural identity, and a strong perception of discrimination.
3. The effects of the motherland's cultural identity and the perception of discrimination tend to vary according to the language spoken in the mother's homeland.

Data and the sample

This study utilizes micro-data from the 2018 Korean Multicultural Family Survey. The sample of this study is composed of 6,607 foreign women under age 65, who were currently married to Korean husbands at the time of the survey.

The sample was divided into two groups: (a) women from English or Chinese-speaking countries; (b) women from other countries. Women from English or Chinese-speaking countries tend to have a strong motherland's cultural identity and a relatively weak perception of discrimination. The absolute majority of women from other countries immigrated from Vietnam and Southeast Asian countries. These women tend to show a relatively weak level of the motherland's cultural identity and a strong perception of discrimination.



Logistic analyses

	Women from English/Chinese-speaking countries				Women from other countries			
	[Model 1]		[Model 2]		[Model 3]		[Model 4]	
	b	Exp(b)	b	Exp(b)	b	Exp(b)	b	Exp(b)
Education years of woman	0.08*	1.08	0.06	1.06	0.11**	1.12	0.09**	1.09
Spousal diff. in education yrs (H-W)	0.04	1.04	0.03	1.03	0.05**	1.05	0.04**	1.04
HH income (ref: Less than 2 M Won)								
2,000,000-2,990,000 Won	-0.11	0.90	-0.14	0.87	0.08	1.08	0.09	1.09
3,000,000-3,990,000 Won	-0.19	0.83	-0.22	0.80	0.17	1.18	0.11	1.12
4,000,000 Won or more	-0.22	0.80	-0.28	0.76	0.19†	1.21	0.13	1.14
Work status of woman	0.22	1.25	0.24	1.27	-0.07	0.93	-0.05	0.96
Husband's white-collar occupation	0.42*	1.53	0.32†	1.38	0.16*	1.18	0.10	1.11
Age of woman	-0.06**	0.94	-0.05**	0.95	0.01	1.01	0.00	1.00
Husband's remarriage	-0.30	0.74	-0.36†	0.70	-0.21*	0.81	-0.22**	0.80
Marital duration	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.00	1.00	0.01	1.01
2 children or more	0.26†	1.30	0.26†	1.30	0.19**	1.21	0.18**	1.20
Urban resident	0.04	1.04	0.02	1.02	0.02	1.02	-0.02	0.98
Korean citizenship	-0.27	0.76	-0.20	0.82	-0.23**	0.80	-0.19**	0.82
Motherland's cultural identity			0.13**	1.14			0.13**	1.14
Perception of discrimination			0.23	1.25			0.31**	1.36
(Constant)	1.32†	3.75	0.11	1.11	-2.10**	0.12	-3.07**	0.05
χ^2	73.84**		118.13**		174.94**		403.89**	
-2 Log Likelihood	1,238.21		1,193.92		6,599.43		6,370.48	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.10		0.16		0.05		0.10	
Number of cases	959		959		5,033		5,033	

Findings

- SES has a positive effect on the mother's cultural identity and the probability of children studying in their mother's homeland.
- Both the motherland's cultural identity and the perception of discrimination show positive effects on the dependent variable.
- However, for foreign women from English or Chinese-speaking countries, the effect of the perception of discrimination is not statistically significant.
- Women from English or Chinese-speaking countries are more affected by the pull factor, while the push factor is more influential for women from other countries, in deciding whether to send children to their mother's homeland for studying.

Policy implications

- Korean government has adopted a universalistic approach to providing supportive policies and action programs for foreign residents. As the proportion of foreign residents increases in a certain region, the government's support and action programs are more likely to be concentrated in that region. However, the results of this study reveal that the major determinants and the mechanisms of children's education studying abroad are different according to their country of origin or their native language.
- The current universalistic approach is not likely to lead to positive effects on the adaptation and integration of foreign residents. To enhance the effectiveness of the policies and action programs regarding their children's education, more attention should be paid to foreign residents' ethnicity and cultural background.

Publication

- Doo-Sub Kim, Seunghyun Lee, and Saerom Lee. 2021. "Ethnic Identity and Perception of Discrimination of Foreign Mothers, and Their Plan to Send Children Back to the Homeland for Studying: Conditional Effects of Mother's Native Language" (in Korean), *Korea Journal of Population Studies*, 44.3: 43-70, DOI: 10.31693/KJPS.2021.09.44.3.43.
- Doo-Sub Kim. 2022. "Back to the Mother's Homeland for Studying: Push, Pull and Conditional Factors for Children of Foreign Women in South Korea," The 6th MMC Regional Conference on *From New Normal to the Next Normal: Migration Research and Policy in the Changing World*, Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, Nakhon Pathom, Thailand, December 1, 2022.