

## Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs) in South Korea: Promoting Harmony and Cultural Integration

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### Abstract

*The first record of international marriages in South Korea was in 1990, and became a phenomenon until 2005. There were approximately 150,000 International Marriage Migrant (IMM) women living in South Korea and most of them are from China, Vietnam, and the Philippines. As a response to the increasing number of IMM, the Multicultural Family Act was enacted in 2008 to establish Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs) to serve as an avenue for accessing and providing community support for IMM. Since there is limited study on the MFSCs, it is important to know the experiences and factors that influence how IMM women access the services of the center.*

*The aim of this study is to explore the experiences as well as the facilitating and hindering factors that influence participation of IMM women to the MFSC's programs and services. The samples for in-depth interview were twenty-one (21) Filipina migrants who were benefiting from the MFSCs from the different areas in Korea namely: Seoul, Daegu, Busan, Gimhae, Suwon, Daejeon, and Gimcheon. The interview-participants were chosen from snow-ball sampling and the centers were identified based on the willingness of the MFSC's managers to support this study. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the transcript of interviews and extensive review of the literatures.*

*The MFSC's programs and services contribute in increasing the knowledge of Filipina IMM on Korean language and culture which improved their relationship with their husband and in-laws. More so, the MFSCs contribute in promoting cultural integration and sense of acceptance among interview participants. The key themes that facilitate participation of interview-participants in MFSCs are the support from the husband and in-laws, active participation of the husband in MFSC's activities, friendly and supportive MFSC staff, and its programs and services like Korean language and culture.*

*Meanwhile, the key themes that hinder the IMMs in their participation to the MFSCs are lack of transportation allowance, location of the center, limited support from husband and in-laws, and limited information about the MFSCs. The staff are the gatekeepers for IMM women in accessing government and community support and services to assist them in their integration to Korean society and family life. Overall, the MFSCs serve as an important link of the South Korean government in promoting family and community harmony and multi-cultural society.*

**Keywords:** *Multiculturalism, Migration, Filipina Migrant, Korean-Filipino marriage, Participation, International Marriage Migrants, Multicultural Family Support Center (MFSCs)*

### 1. Introduction

International migration refers to the movement of people for various reasons to a

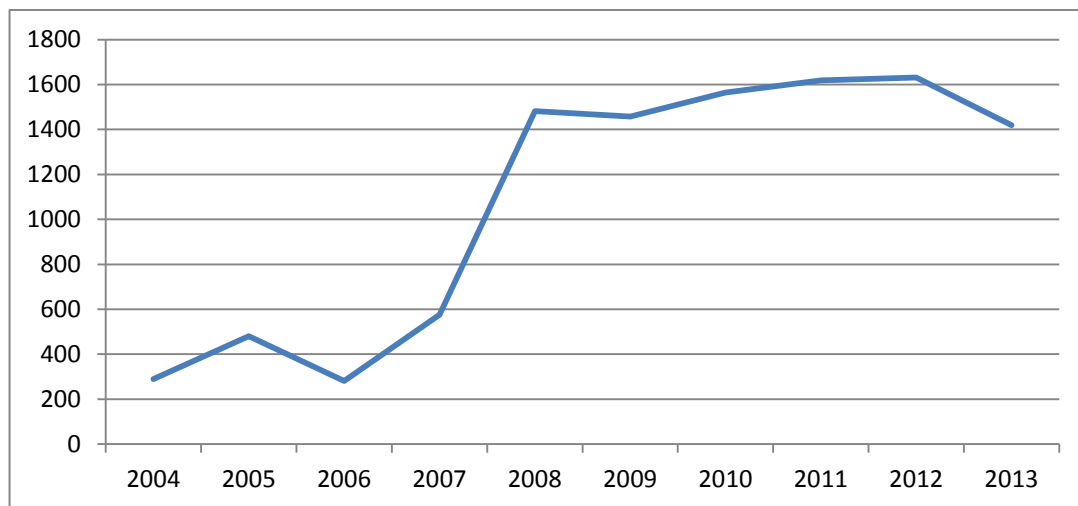
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country for a period of at least twelve months and the country of destination becomes their usual residence (Czaika & Haas, 2014; International Organization for Migration, 2015). Most of the overseas workers are male from Asia to work in the Middle East oil industries (Arnold & Shah, 1984). At present, a rising number of female migrant workers in the Philippines working in developed countries is noted. Filipino female migrant workers are more committed to their obligations toward helping their family than their male counterparts (Tacoli, 1999). Filipino migrant workers are most needed in medical services and service industry. For example, the common destinations for female overseas workers were Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand (Castles & Miller, 2009). The Philippines is one of the top most sending counties of overseas female workers including Indonesia and Sri Lanka.

International marriage migration is an emerging phenomenon particularly in South Korea. In 2016, there was a total of 305,446 marriage immigrants, and naturalized Korean women migrants married to Korean men was at 305,446 (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015c). Commission on Filipinos Overseas (2014) reported that there was a total number of 14,669 Filipinas married with Koreans from 2004 to 2013. Table 1 below shows that there is a significant increase of Filipina IMM in 2007 and there is a slight decline in 2012 attributed to stricter regulations on the processing of IMM visa in Korea and in the Philippines.

**Table 1. Registered Filipina-Korean Marriages in 2004-2013**



Source: CFO Compendium of Statistics on International Migration, 2013

Given the rising cases of mail order bride, the Philippine government intensified efforts to crackdown on illegal marriage brokers operating in the country (C K San Pedro, 2015). Meanwhile, the Korean government required satisfactory level of Korean language before issuing a visa for IMM. The Korean government enacted a policy on September 22, 2008 entitled “Support for Multicultural Families Act” which established the Multicultural Family Support Centers to provide one-stop community services and support to IMM and multicultural families (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015b). The aim of the MFSC is to “support for early adaption and stable settlement of multicultural family and promote sound international marriage and to enhance Korean society’s receptivity to multiple cultures” (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015c) The MFSC is the centerpiece of Korean government’s multicultural family support services (Kim, Chang, Kim, & Sun, 2012).

Multicultural family support services through the establishment of Marriage Immigrant Support Center started in 2006 in Korea (Kim *et al.*, 2012). In 2009, with the establishment of the Law for Support of Multicultural Family, the center was renamed as

Multicultural Family Support Center (MFSC) which mandated to provide services to multicultural family (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015a). This study suggests management model of MFSC in two types: metropolitan and urban-rural complex. Taking advantage of plentiful local infrastructure, metropolitan type of model proposes MFSC as a hub of community cooperation network for multicultural family support services. Urban-rural complex type suggests the center as a key service delivery organization because of insufficient local infrastructure, similar to the current model.

This study is meaningful in that it presents a management model which takes regional characteristics into account, at a point where there is sufficient supply of multicultural family support service delivery system (Kim *et al.*, 2012). In 2016, there is a total of 217 Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs) in Korea (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015c). The Minister of Gender Equality and Family (2015c) assisted a total of 46,701 female immigrant victims of violence in 201 with the following services: counseling, treatment recovery program, medical assistance, legal assistance, self-reliance, departure to home country, attacker assistance, and children of victims assistance. The majority of female immigrant victims of violence were provided with treatment and recovery program (10,952 victims) in 2015 (Minister of Gender Equality and Family, 2015c).

The MFSC shows that there is limited services for social integration of marriage immigrant women and suggested a multidimensional and two-way approaches to promote social integration of IMM rather than assimilation (Ga Yeon Oh, 2015). In another study on IMM in rural community in Korea, Kim Ki Hong (2016) identified the following challenges namely: cultural gap, weather disparity, isolation, family conflict, children nurture, phobia of violence, double torture as foreigner, and economical difficulty. There is a need to consider the regional characteristic and condition of IMM in both urban and rural areas since there is a low utilization rate per population of MFSC services in urban areas (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

## 2. Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to explore the programs and services as well as the facilitating and hindering factors of the women migrants' participation to the MFSC program and services.

## 3. Methodology

The sample size of twenty-one (21) Filipina women migrants voluntarily participated in the interview. The sample interview participants lived in Busan, Seoul, Gimcheon, Suwon, Gimhae, Gwangju (Chollanamdo) and Daejeon. The researchers coordinated with the MFSC management to request their assistance in inviting the beneficiaries of their program who were willing to voluntarily participate in the research.

The open-ended questionnaire was divided into two-parts: Part 1 was about the socio-demographic information of the participants while Part 2 asked about the experiences and participation of the sample interview participants to the MFSC program. The in-depth interview took 30-40 minutes per participant. The interview was conducted in English, was digitally recorded, and transcribed. Some interview participants answered the questions in Filipino, and were carefully translated into English and retranslated into Filipino by the researchers to ensure quality and accuracy of the translation.

The transcripts were analyzed through thematic analysis using NVivo 10 software. NVivo assists the researchers to interrogate the data and it provides rigor to the analysis process by validating the researcher's own impression of the thematic findings. According to Sotirios and Sarantakos (2013), thematic analysis employs an inductive approach, whereby the researchers identify the emerging themes from the data and assist

in identifying recurrent themes. The responses were grouped according to themes and sub-themes while patterns, trends, and relationships were analyzed.

## 4. Findings and Analysis

### Demographic Profile

The interviewees are Filipino women migrants whose age ranges from as young as 18 to 41, majority of them are from the age category between 31 to 35 years old. They are married to Korean men whose ages are from 29, the youngest, and to 55 years old, the eldest. According to Statistics Korea (2011), the age gap between men and women of multicultural families is higher compared to the age gap between Korean couples. The average age gap is 10 years; Korean husbands are much older while the foreign wives are much younger. This study reinforced the initial findings of San Pedro (2015) which reported that Filipinas tend to marry at a younger age while Koreans marry at an older age. Most of the Filipino women who are married to Koreans are college graduates (Statistics Korea, 2011).

Table 2 presents the socio-demographic information of each of the participant. Majority of the interview-participants are not receiving monthly income. This study found that IMM with low income are also with low educational attainment. Moreover, majority of the IMM are living with their in-laws, particularly with their mother-in-law. Most of participants mentioned that they lived with their in-laws when they first arrived in Korea and they have been living in South Korea for less than 3 years. The mother-in-law provides support by accompanying the IMM in joining the MFSC's program and services. One interviewee mentioned, *"I live with my mother-in-law. She even brings me to my Korean class and waits for me until I finish class. So, I don't have time to make friends and talk with my classmates after class"* (1-A, 35 year-old.).

Majority of the interview-participants are college graduates, and two participants have finished the postgraduate degree. They were able to convince their husband to live in a separate house preferably within the proximity of the house of their in-laws so they could see them more often. All of the interview-participants have younger age compared to their husband. There were 10 out of 21 participants who are unemployed while five are working as teachers.

**Table 2. Participant's Socio-Demographic Information**

Code of participants	Age	Hubby's Age	Living with in-laws	Educ. Level	Supporting family in the Philippines	Occupation	Monthly Income	Place in Korea
1-A	35	50	No	College level	No	None	None	Daejeon
2-A	29	30	No	College level	Yes	None	None	Daejeon
1-C	31	48	No	College level	No	Teacher	960,000	Suwon
2-C	39	47	No	College level	Yes	Teacher	2M	Gwangju
3-C	23	43	No	Vocational	Yes	None	None	Busan
1-E	29	41	No	College level	No	None	None	Gwangju
2-E	21	37	No	College level	No	None	None	Seoul
3-E	32	43	No	College level	No	Teacher	1M	Gimhae
4-E	39	50	No	High school	Yes	Farm	1.4M	Gimcheon

5-E	24	40	Yes	Vocational	Yes	Shop	2 M	Daejeon
1-J	18	29	Yes	College level	Yes	None	None	Busan
2-J	32	-	No	College level	Yes	Business	3M	Gimhae
1-M	39	42	Yes	High school	Yes	Interpreter	1.2M	Gimhae
2-M	27	45	Yes	College level	Yes	Teacher	200,000	Gwangju
3-M	40	49	No	Graduate S.	Yes	Teacher	-	Seoul
1-N	41	43	No	Graduate S	No	Business	300,000	Seoul
2-N	34	44	Yes	Vocational	Yes	None	-	Busan
1-R	38	51	No	High school	Yes	Factory	1.1M	Suwon
4-C	33	41	No	College level	No	None	None	Suwon
1-S	52	55	No	College level	No	None	None	Gimcheon
1-W	28	39	Yes	High school	No	None	None	Gimcheon

### ***IMM continue to work and send remittances***

There were 12 out of 21 interviewee-participants who mentioned that they are still working and sending financial support to their families in the Philippines. Some of the interviewees work as English teachers, factory workers, and some have their own businesses.

Given the meager income of the participants, they still manage to send financial assistance to their family in the Philippines. As one mentioned, *“The amount depends on my available resources, or the need at home”* (1-R, 28 year-old). Filipinos are basically family-oriented people and helping family members who are in a difficult situation is one of the distinct sociocultural traits of the Filipino. *“My family, especially my younger brothers and sisters need me. That’s why I am doing my best to send them money, though how small it is”* (2-N, 34 year-old).

### ***Sources of Information on the Multicultural Family Support Centers***

The interview participants identified the CFO as their main source of information about the MFSCs. The CFO speakers and facilitators mentioned the MFSC programs and services during the Pre-Departure Orientation (PDOS) and gave some books and brochures. Since most of the interviewee-respondents got to know their husbands through their friends and relatives, they also got some information about the MFSCs from them.

As per Republic Act 8239 and Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Order 28-94, Filipinos going abroad who are marrying foreign nationals are required to attend the CFO guidance and counseling program. In the case of Filipinas married to Koreans, an increasing number of problems encountered were recorded. It is in this light that CFO decided to offer a two-day Korean Cultural Workshop. The workshop aims to give the women migrants detailed and comprehensive information about Korea, its culture and tradition, and their rights and responsibilities, as well as the expectations upon arrival in Korea. To further improve the Korean Culture Workshop for IMMs, and to ensure that the modules are responsive to the needs of the IMMs, CFO partnered with the Ministry of Gender, Equality and Family (MOGEF) and the Korea Center for United Nation Human Rights Policy (KOCUN). MOGEF trained CFO counselors who handle the PDOS of women migrants preparing themselves to come to Korea. CFO also works hand in hand

with KOCUN and the Korean Embassy in the Philippines in resolving women migrant related cases.

San Pedro (2015) found that the women migrants who have attended the Korean Cultural Workshop were very satisfied with the information discussed about Korea including the basic Korean language. The discussion about the laws affecting IMMs were also beneficial to them. It gave them more knowledge on how to adjust with the weather, culture, and life in Korea especially in dealing with their in-laws. They became more prepared in performing their role as a housewife rather than as job-seekers in Korea.

In Korea, the interviewees heard about the Centers first from their husbands, and then from the City Hall or the Immigration Office, upon application of their Alien Registration Card/ID. To know about them further, they were also given brochures and some reading materials. The new Filipina friends they met in Korea as well as their mothers-in-law informed them also of the presence of these Centers.

### ***Programs and Services of the Multicultural Family Support Centers***

Based on the interview-participants, the following programs are being offered by the MFSCs: (1) education services to promote an understanding of Korean language and Korean culture, (2) interpretation and translation services, (3) educational services for parents, (4) educational services for multicultural families, (5) support the language development of their children, (6) school life emotional coaching and life coaching services, (7) employment and business venture support services, and (8) improvement of multicultural awareness.

Educational services promote understanding of Korean language and culture. Furthermore, it contributes to the adjustment of migrants to their local community. Most of the interview-participants joined Korean language classes and field visits to historical places in Korea. All of the interview-participants attended the lectures and seminars conducted by the Korean immigration since it is required in getting the alien registration certificate. This study found that knowledge of Korean language is important for most of the interview-participants. Meanwhile, one interview-participant mentioned that some participants have not attended the succeeding Korean language classes which disappointed the MFSC staff based on the statement below:

*“The thing is, Filipinas have a bad image here. For example, after registering for the Korean language class, they go to class once, and then they don’t come back anymore. They don’t finish the program. Naturally, the center staff is disappointed” (1-N, 41 year-old).*

In some cases, some volunteers visit the houses of IMMs to teach them as mentioned by one interview-participant. The language classes offered by the MFSCs are appreciated by most of the interview-participants since it made their life a lot easier based on the statement below. Before the establishment of the MFSCs, there were few centers offering Korean language classes.

*“The newcomers are very lucky because they can go to many centers. They can have Korean language. During our time, there was none, or very few. We only did self-study. Now, it’s difficult because we’re quite old. The younger ones are better off compared to us before.” (3-M, 40 year-old).*

In 2013, marriage immigrants were required to pass the beginner level of the Korean language proficiency test as well as attend Korean language course before they can get a visa to Korea. Another interview-participant also narrated that:

*“When I arrived in 2000, I was alone, I had no Filipino friends, for how many years I did not meet any Filipino. I was always with my family. It turned out positive, though, because I developed my Korean language skills. I learned from my sister-in-law and my husband. Though it’s not grammatically correct, they understood me” (1-M, 39 year-old).*

Language barrier has been identified as one of the main reasons of marriage failures and the high rate of divorce among international marriages. The lack of Korean language proficiency affects various aspects of their everyday lives such as working, communicating with their husband and in-laws (Panuncio & Bae, 2012).

Another important service of the MFSC is the translation services for immigrants who do not speak Korean. Translation services are provided in 12 different languages. According to the statement below from one interview-participant, the translation services are very helpful in assisting them in resolving their conflicts either with their husbands or with their in-laws.

*“There was a time when I wanted to divorce with my husband because we were having a difficult problem. I cannot express myself fully because my Korean ability was not enough. So, I sought the help of the multicultural family support center for translation” (5-E, 24 year-old).*

Some participants mentioned that they also avail of seminars such as child care, safety and sanitation, first aid, garbage segregation, and cooking lessons. One interview participant said that she likes joining these activities because aside from learning something new about Korea, the centers also

*“give certificates upon completion of the activity, for example, the ocarina class, as a proof that we have completed the class. These certificates are needed when you apply for citizenship because they ask which multicultural family support center did you go to, your level of Korean language, and the activities you have participated in, like the cultural integration program” (2-E, 21 year-old).*

The MFSC educational services deepened the relationship between couples and their understanding of each other’s cultures. Most of the interview-participants joined the camps, family day, and couple’s day which contributes in promoting family harmony. The MFSCs, particularly in the case of Daejeon, have a partnership with a group of Filipino professors and organized an activity called the Couple’s Day where wives and husbands spend time together to give them the opportunity to explore their relationships deeper and learn from the experiences of other couples. Most of the participants mentioned, they indicated the importance of more interaction with their husband, as well as active participation of their husband in MFSC program and activities.

The MFSCs also offer services to the children of the women migrants to support the language development of their children. Professional language instructors of the MFSC provide Korean language training for the children of migrants which prepare them in school. Cultural education is also integrated in the Korean language classes. The MFSCs implemented Korean language classes not only for women migrant but also for multicultural children.

The MFSC provides school life emotional coaching and life coaching services for multicultural children like taekwondo or sports classes. Moreover, mentoring program provided by volunteers to teach them and help them cope with their school lessons and homework. In addition, medical and dental check-up was provided as well as arts and music classes. According to Nam (2012), the factors affecting the social adjustment of children from multicultural families are self-esteem, parental marital relations, bullying,

and the support of adults other than parents. Among these factors, the support of adults other than parents is found to be the most influential in the social development of children in multicultural families. Their interaction with their fellow multicultural children, with the guidance and assistance of their teachers and counselors at the MFSCs help them adjust healthily in the Korean environment, and be able to cope with the demands of the Korean society.

In Korea, where academies or “hagwons” for these after school activities are very expensive, these activities being offered by the centers for free are a big help to ease their financial burdens. As one participant said, *“My kids avail of the discounted Kumon Math and English studies. I only pay 5,000 won for each child. Normally, it’s 33,000 won per subject. Last year, all my three children were able to avail”* (2-C, 39 year-old).

Most women migrants send money to their families in the Philippines. The MFSC provides training on baking, barista, cosmetology, computer and others to equip them with the skills they need either to find employment or to start their own business. Upon completion of the programs, the centers also help them in finding employment.

Lastly, participating in activities such as festivals, singing contests, cultural presentations, women migrants learn about the culture of other MFSC clients and they also learn to become more appreciative of their own culture and heritage. Table 3 below reveals the programs and services mentioned by the interview-participants.

**Table 3. Programs of the MFSCs Participated in by Filipina Migrant Women**

Code of Participants	Programs/Activities/Services Participation
1-A	Tours, safety seminars, first aid, Korean language
2-A	Cooking, Korean language- trip/tour
1-C	Korean class, gatherings with fellow Filipinas, bazaar, festivals, sports activities
2-C	cooking class, trips/tours, camps
3-C	cooking class
1-E	Korean class, soap-making, Immigration office seminars
2-E	cooking class
3-E	Korean class, cooking lessons, tours/trips, parties/gathering, visit to the Philippines, singing contests
4-E	Family day
5-E	playing ocarina, festivals, cooking lessons, Korean language, tours
1-J	ocarina class, cooking class, Korean class, couple’s day, taekwondo (son, but paying)
2-J	culture and life program (cooking, manner of dressing, thanksgiving and what to wear, kimchi making), tours to historical and traditional places
1-M	all activities (before 2006), cooking lessons, tours, child care, do’s and don’ts of Korean culture
2-M	cooking class, Korean language, soap making, t-shirt printing, seminars from immigration about laws in Korea, citizenship, etc.
3-M	free pre-natal check-up and delivery with my twins, monthly camping, Korean language class (one-on-one class at home for 4 months, 1.5 hours, cooking lessons, mentoring program for children, outings and Christmas parties, discounted Kumon Math and English studies for kids
1-N	tutoring program for my child, seminar on housekeeping, garbage segregation, etc.
2-N	cooking class, ocarina class, tours
1-R	Korean language for a very short time
4-C	festivals, dances, cultural presentations, cooking lessons, Korean language, field trips
1-S	Korean class, cooking class, barista, cosmetology, tours, baking, culture programs



1-W	community service, cultural performances, Korean language, tutoring for children, family day
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***Facilitating and Hindering Factors in Participation to MFSC Programs and Services***

This study found that most interview-participants are self-motivated since they are interested on learning new culture and to communicate with their husband and parents-in-law. Moreover, their friends and relatives encourage most of the interview-participants to join MFSC activities. Participation in MFSC programs and services relieved boredom and stress at home as well as it provides opportunity for meeting new friends from their own country. Some interview-participants mentioned that MFSC programs are provided for free and they contribute in the fulfillment of the requirements for citizenship, accessibility of MFSC to their house, and ultimately, to be able to find employment while participating in MFSC activities.

Meanwhile, some interview-participants mentioned several reasons why they discontinue their participation to the MFSCs. Firstly, the distance of MFSCs from their residence, and secondly, some MFSCs near their residence have limited services.

The lack of support from their husband is also a major reason why they discontinue their participation in MFSC activities. Moreover, the MFSC’s policy on selecting the beneficiaries for some services was considered by some interview-participants as a reason for not joining in some activities. Lastly, the slots of some MFSC program and services are limited, also a reason that discouraged participation of some interview-participants. Table 4 below identified the facilitating and hindering factors of the interview-participants from attending the programs and services of the MFSCs.

**Table 4. Facilitating and Hindering Factors in Participation to MFSC**

Pseudo name	Facilitating Factors for Joining	Hindering Factors for Discontinuing
1-A	my husband wants it, bored at home	got pregnant, lack of support from husband, had a baby
2-A	I want to learn	baby from husband’s former wife
1-C	want to meet many people, to enjoy	pregnancy after a few months, center is far from our house, husband cannot bring me coz of his work
2-C	invited by friends	time schedule is in conflict with work schedule
3-C	my sister and husband told me	time, limited slots, they choose who can join
1-E	my husband told me	distance, far from home, center’s services near my house is limited, time, night activities
2-E	friends invited me	conflict with schedule in the university (Korean language)
3-E	I want to learn, bored at home, my husband pushed me	conflict with work
4-E		busy with house chores, hate studying, hate thinking
5-E	Free, to learn	
1-J	to understand my in-laws and husband, to get certificates needed for citizenship, center is near my house	time (child’s schedule is in conflict w/center activity, work schedule
2-J	want to learn, help myself, to be able to communicate, to express oneself, free food/bus, sometimes with pocket money, not to be stressed at home, busy with something	slots are taken, many Filipinas now unlike before
1-M	to learn, free, to be able to communicate	busy with job

2-M	I'm not Korean so I want to learn their language so that if I have a problem I know what to do, attended almost all activities	
3-M	I wanted to learn, free/ discounted, made my adjustment a lot easier	husband's availability, time schedule, financial constraints
1-N	to learn the thinks, I do not know	time is in conflict with my work schedule
2-N	to learn, not to be bored at home, to meet other people	
1-R	to learn	time w/work, I need to work for my family
4-C	to learn, kept myself busy	
1-S	want to learn their language, earn certificates, get a job	conflict with work schedule
1-W	to learn about Korea and their culture	

### ***Participation of Korean Husband and their Family in MFSC***

The MFSCs organize activities that involve Korean husband and their family. Some MFSC activities require the participation of the husband, their children, and their in-laws. However, this study found that most of the Korean husbands are only active during the initial phase of the program based on the statement of an interview-participant, *“My husband brought me to the MFSC to register for the Korean language class and after that he left me to do things on my own.”*

Another interview-participant mentioned that, *“My husband will not definitely join because he is not fond of such activities. It's ok for us to attend but not him. He does not like it. One time I remember there was a program for couples here. I persuaded him, but still he didn't like to join.”*

Though some husbands are joining activities such as couple's day and weekend camps with their wives and their children, the women migrants felt that these were not enough to strengthen and deepen their bonding and relationships as family based on the statement of one interview-participant *“My only wish is for my husband to join so that we can have time with each other and be able to understand each other's culture more” (1-A, 35 year-old).*

There are also activities exclusively for children such as painting lessons, singing contests, taekwondo lessons, and mentoring program which the women migrants consider to be very beneficial because they don't have to pay the extremely expensive academy fees in Korea. The husband's busy work schedule is the number one reason why they cannot join the activities. Most husbands work until late hours at night and even during weekends. So, even if they would like to join, the schedules are in conflict with their work schedule. One mother narrated, *“My husband cannot attend. There are seminars for parents like how to raise children but I cannot attend just by myself. It's on Saturdays and my husband goes to work, he comes home late” (1-M, 39 year-old).*

### **Learnings/Benefits Gained from the MFSCs Program and Services**

In general, this study found that majority of the interview-participants learned the basic Korean language. It improved their Korean speaking, reading, and writing. Some of them mentioned that they are now more confident to communicate with other people especially to Koreans and with the family members of their husband. Moreover, the women migrants have visited historical places and museums which contribute to their understanding and acceptance of Korean culture through the MFSCs. In addition, Korean food is a very important aspect of culture and cooking lessons are provided in the MFSC.

One interview-participant also mentioned that she leaned new skills like some practical arts, playing the ocarina, t-shirt printing, ceramic making, and others. Further, the most significant benefit from joining the MFSC activities was they were able to meet new friends, not only from their own country but also from other countries. Most importantly,

they were able to share their difficulties and drew strength from one another and they consider each other as a family in Korea.

## 5. Recommendation

There is a need to strengthened information dissemination on MFSCs program and services as part of the pre-departure orientation for IMMs prior to their arrival in Korea. In addition, there is a need to promote active participation of Korean husband and in-laws in the MFSC's programs and services. Programs and services also need to address the need of newly arrived migrants in Korea. The Korean husband should also need to attend the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) given by the Commission on Filipino Overseas. Lastly, this study recommends further study on the impact of the MFSC programs and the needed enhancement of its existing services.

## 6. Conclusion

The lectures from the Immigration Office and other relevant agencies were very beneficial for IMMs to know the regulations on Korean citizenship and other related laws. Active participation in MFSCs such as Korean language, cooking, family day, camps, and others are important for IMMs to successfully integrate in the Korean society. The MFSCs are important community support for multicultural families. The center staff served as gatekeepers for IMMs in accessing social support and welfare from the government. For example, having a counselor or MFSC worker who is knowledgeable of both Filipino and Korean cultures and language is important in enhancing the delivery of its programs and services. The MFSC's activities may need to expand its services to cater to those who are not available during day time. Overall, the MFSC's programs and services contribute in promoting family and social harmony as well as cultural integration of IMMs.

The MFSC activities and lessons are also beneficial to their children in educating them about having parents from different cultural background. They request for "*more free lessons for children*" according to the interview-participants. The MFSC may need to explore utilizing mainstream multicultural television and radio program as well as internet media in promoting their program and services. Moreover, the staff of the MFSCs may consider conducting home visit. The MFSCs may need to develop programs to address the misunderstanding between in-laws and IMMs. Lastly, the MFSC is an important community-based support for the integration of migrants to Korean society and it is an important community link of the Government of South Korea in promoting family and community harmony.

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