



First Generation Korean Immigrant Parents' Perception of the Common Discipline Strategies: A Pilot Study



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Backgrounds

- ❖ Parents teach children socialization rules through discipline. Discipline is defined as the set of acts and rules that parents use to socialize their children, that is, to teach them the values and normative behaviors of the society in which they will have to function as adults.
- ❖ Therefore, parental discipline is culturally developed.
- ❖ To understand parental discipline strategies, one must know the cultural background of where parenting takes place.
- ❖ It is even more important to know parents' cultural background when parenting is taking place in a society where the socialization rules differ from the parents' learned socialization rules.

Purpose

- ❖ To explore the perception of the first-generation Korean immigrant parents regarding discipline.

Korean immigrants

- ❖ Voluntary migrants.
- ❖ Came to the US hoping for more political, social, and occupational security and better educational opportunities for their children.

Cultural differences between Korea and US

	Korean immigrants: Collectivism	European Americans: Individualism
Cultural context	We In-group Interdependence Duties/ obligations	I Individual Independence Pleasure seeking
Parenting goals	Interdependence Cooperation Absolute obedience Respect High education achievement	Independence Distinctness Autonomy Self-reliance Self-assertion

Sample

- ❖ 7 first-generation Korean immigrant parents (5 mothers, 2 fathers) of children aged between 5 and 8 years.
- ❖ Age: 36.3 (SD=4.8) years olds.
- ❖ Education: 14.8 (SD=1.9) years.
- ❖ US residency: 7.7 (SD=5.2) years.
- ❖ Family income: 86% between \$40,000 - \$60,000.

Interview Questions

- ❖ What do you think about [each specific discipline strategy]?
- ❖ Discipline strategies: ignoring, yelling, threatening, time out, removing/adding privileges, spanking, hitting, ask child to correct mistakes, giving more chores, reasoning, praise, hugging/kissing, using tangible rewards, or sticker chart
- ❖ Does this strategy fit with your cultural background?
- ❖ Is there any other discipline strategy that you use?

Results

6 common themes: Korean-style, American-style, cultural change, sensitivity to child, unique strategies, & communication concerns.

1) Korean-style discipline: correction, spanking, hitting, less hugging/kissing

- "When my children lived in Korea, they got hit. Korean style, because they did not listen to me. After we came here, people said we could not hit our children so they did not get hit. On the other hand it is my voice that goes up now."
- "Although it has changed for the better since our father's generation, when he lived very strictly, we still have influences from our parent's generation. Therefore, there is not that much expression (of love) such as, hugging or kissing, to our children."

2) American-style discipline: time out, using a sticker chart, praising, hugging/kissing, giving chores, removing/adding privileges

- "Americans make children go to time-out frequently."
- "Sticker charts are something that teachers do"
- "Americans take away privileges often, but Korean parents don't do that much."
- "I think American people live very sensibly, giving out compliments very often such as you are pretty, your hair, glasses, and clothes are pretty."

3) Recent immigrant parents were not familiar with common positive discipline strategies in the United States. As they adapted to the US society, they discontinued what they perceived to be negative aspects of Korean-style discipline and adopted positive aspects of American discipline.

- "In order to raise children in the US, I think it is necessary to brag about children to other people, which is considered as foolish in Korea."
- "I learn very much about complimenting and bragging from American people."
- "It is in my head to hug and kiss my children, but my heart and my actions do not follow my mind."

4) Parents were sensitive about children's views on discipline.

- "I try to speak with my children when I think they have done something wrong and they do not think anything is wrong with the behavior."
- "Asking your child to correct his mistakes is good; but if it is said in a bad way, your child will take it wrong and perceive it as nagging."

5) Two unique discipline strategies included raising arms and giving more homework.

- "Making them study, not do chores; 'go study!'"
- "To give my child time to think about his misbehavior I make him raise his arms. When he raises his arms for 10 minutes, I want my son to realize that 'when I do something wrong, then I get this kind of pain.'"

6) Parents were concerned about communication problems with children.

- "They do not understand when I speak Korean. As a matter of fact, I think there is a limit."
- "People say that when your children grow a little older and do not listen to their mother, they act like they do not understand Korean. Children say that they only know English and the mom speaks only Korean; then the mother goes crazy."



Discussion

- ❖ Parents recognize how their experience as a child influences on their discipline strategies. Parents try to discontinue intergenerational continuity of negative Korean-style discipline. They try to use positive discipline strategies that are contrary to Korean values.
- ❖ Parents learn American-style discipline from pediatricians, teachers of children and customers of their small businesses.
- ❖ Parents are sensitive about how their children think about their discipline strategies. They recognize that their own discipline ideas can be different from their children's ideas. They are also conscious about the effectiveness and positiveness & negativities of the discipline strategies.
- ❖ Korean parents seem to view children's time into two types: study and play. Other than stressing the importance of study, parents do not make explicit limit setting.
- ❖ Parents use two unique discipline strategies. They seem to use raised hands as a sort of time-out technique. It is time for children to think about what they have done wrong; they can be in pain from raising their hands.
- ❖ Parents experience communication problems with their children because: Parents are limited in English and children are limited in Korean. Parents try to teach Korean by speaking Korean, sending children to Korean language class, and sending them to Korea in summer.

Conclusions

- ❖ Professionals who work with Korean immigrant families need to be sensitive about their discipline strategies and cultural backgrounds that shape discipline.
- ❖ It is necessary to develop culturally sensitive parenting program for Korean immigrant families.

