

# Determining the quality of life of marriage migrant women in Korea\*

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**Abstract:** In search of greater economic and social opportunities, people emigrate, choosing to leave their countries of birth. Currently, many married migrant women are building new lives in Korea. They are no longer foreigners or part of the social minority but neighbors raising children and engaging in economic activity in Korea. The purposes of this study are to clarify the importance of studying, in the field of policy studies, the quality of life of marriage migrant women who left their homelands to live in Korea, and to analyze various factors that affect quality of life. Specifically, family factors, relational factors, social factors, and cultural and policy factors are examined. Based on the results of the empirical analysis, this study suggests various policy implications for enhancing the quality of life of marriage migrant women.

**Keywords:** Marriage migrant women, Quality of life, Multiculturalism, Multicultural Family Support Center

## INTRODUCTION

Following globalization, the number of foreigners residing in Korea has rapidly increased. According to the National Statistics Office, there were 2,049,441 foreign residents in 2016. Among these, 150,605 migrants have married and built families

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with Koreans. Women account for about 84% of all migrants coming to Korea through marriage.<sup>1</sup> With this visible phenomenon of the “feminization” of migrants, these “marriage migrant women” have become the main target for immigrant and welfare policies. By marrying Korean men, migrant women are expected to resolve the shortage of brides to unmarried countrymen and subsequently, the problem of the low fertility characterizing Korean society. This social demand for migrating brides must be reconciled with the Korean family system, which is based on a local bloodline and an ethnically homogeneous society (Kim, 2008a; Nho & Lee, 2016).

Marriage migrant women in Korea face complex difficulties due to language barriers, cultural differences, domestic conflicts, and social discrimination (Kim, 2008b). Specifically, the traditional patriarchal culture remains strong in rural areas, where many migrant brides settle. Moreover, Korean men of lower socioeconomic status and their families tend to look down on migrant women from underdeveloped countries and try to impose strict rules on them that cannot be imposed on most Korean women. These newly-wed migrant women are pushed to discard the cultures of their home countries and assimilate into Korean society.

The Korean government has provided diverse means of policy support to assist the settlement of marriage migrant women. Nevertheless, there is criticism of whether such policies reflect a thorough understanding of multiculturalism. Thus far, policy responses to marriage migrant women are mostly economic, neglecting their humane anticipation in finding their worth in the community and realizing their dreams of participating in society as equal citizens. Moreover, suspicion has emerged regarding the extent to which these policies identify the needs of marriage migrant women and their contribution to improving their quality of life and social adjustment.

This study approaches marriage migrant women as new members of the Korean community, who deserve comprehensive policy support without being limited to the main target group of Korean immigration policy. The study takes a multicultural perspective to identify effective policy alternatives. In particular, we aim to understand the conditions of improving their quality of life by identifying factors affecting their life satisfaction. In so doing, this research is expected to provide useful empirical findings to relevant policy makers. To address factors affecting the quality of life of marriage migrant women, multiple factors including family life, personal relations, social life, cultural orientation, and public service participation are analyzed.

This paper develops a research model for statistical analyses after reviewing the literature on marriage migrant women and quality of life. Subsequently, we conducted causal relationship analyses of the factors affecting quality of life. Finally, we dis-

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1. See [www.index.go.kr](http://www.index.go.kr).

cuss major findings from the research and make recommendations for policies on marriage migrant women in Korea.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Quality of Life of Married Migrant Woman

Marriage migrant women are part of those community members who constitute families raising children in Korean society. Among them, some have attained Korean nationality and others have not. So that marriage migrant women could start families and successfully settle in Korea, the Korean government enacted the *Multicultural Families Support Act in 2008*, and runs various programs to ensure their cultural adaptation, to improve their family relationships, and to provide social support. However, social and cultural attitudes towards marriage migrant women mean that they are still not accepted as “Korean,” since many international marriages are currently merely for economic purposes. Marriage migrant women face various types of mistreatment if they do not subject to their partner or partner’s family (Kim, 2010; Wang, 2007). Given this background, we consider that in terms of policies in Korea, it is important to comprehensively examine the relationship between marriage migrant women’s quality of life and various factors that could affect it.

First, the happiness and satisfaction of marriage migrant women are directly related to the mental wellbeing of multicultural family members (e.g., husband, children, or other family members). In addition, considering the reality in which the number of marriage migrant women and the multicultural families to which they belong is continuously increasing, their happiness and satisfaction should ultimately be relevant to the psychological health of the many members of Korean society that interact with multicultural families. Thus, the mental satisfaction and attitudes acquired by marriage migrant women in their daily lives are issues pertaining to the wellbeing of the overall Korean society and community. Most important, as a citizen of Korea and member of Korean society, marriage migrant women’s quality of life is an important national issue. Thus, it is essential to identify the factors that influence their quality of life to increase national happiness.

Second, studies on marriage migrant women’s quality of life provide important data for examining and evaluating the multicultural policies implemented in Korea. Currently, multiple government departments outside the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family are implementing multicultural policies related to marriage migrant women. The results of this study will not only infer how well these women adjust to

Korean society, but also provide important leads for their successful settlement. In particular, considering that Korean society maintains a strong belief in ethnic or cultural unity, it is essential to comprehensively examine various predisposing factors. In this regard, it is important for the Korean government to widen their perspective and propose a direction after thoroughly analyzing the establishment and effective management of multicultural policies.

Third, this study serves as a small but valuable step towards realizing the values of humanity appropriate for the global era. Therefore, through continuous practical and research-related efforts, the Korean government will be able to anticipate a future of recognition by international society through its success in implementing policies for a multicultural society. Specifically, within the “Korean wave (Hallyu) in public policy” era, which spreads Korea’s excellent administrative system and experience to developing countries, studies on marriage migrant women’s quality of life will foster deep implications for policies as well.

As previously discussed, this study does not merely focus on the psychological satisfaction of a particular group, but draws meaningful outcomes for government policies in Korea. As discussion on policy itself exists to faithfully fulfill human dignity (Lasswell, 1951), this study aims to provide a direction for Korean marriage migrant women to improve their difficult situation and pursue better socially communal lives.

Quality of life is a feeling based on life satisfaction, dissatisfaction, happiness, and personal welfare, and is an individual’s subjective assessment of overall life (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Dalkey & Rourke, 1973; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). In the past, quality of life was assessed using objective indicators such as economic factors, housing, or environmental conditions. Recently, however, many cognitive and emotional elements in the subjective realm, including happiness, satisfaction level, and psychological wellbeing, have been emphasized (Campbell, 1981; Abbey & Andrews, 1985). Thus, this study also focuses on the satisfaction of life that is subjectively perceived, rather than on objective indicators, and examines the determinants thereof.

### **The difference in rural and urban**

Marriage migrant women in Korea are facing various problems, including communication disorders, family conflicts, discrimination as foreigners, and economic difficulties. However, these issues can vary significantly depending on the areas they are settled. For example, Nam & Ahn (2011) find out that migrant women’s psychological stress and marital satisfaction are different depending on their residential

areas. Urban areas are likely to provide more chances to find a job outside family chores, expose to meet people of diverse backgrounds, and receive policy support.

Kamiya & Lee (2009) report that East Asian women who are familiar with the local situation in Korea are reluctant to marry a man living countryside. Living conditions and life chances in rural areas are poorer than in urban areas. In the countryside, their husband's social position is likely to be lower and finding a decent job for themselves is very limited. In addition to this economic deprivation, cultural access is limited due to the lack of cultural facilities. Moreover, marriage migrant women's children tend to be surrounded by less beneficial educational environment.

### **Determinants of Quality of Life**

According to the ERG theory by Alderfer (1972), human needs are classified as existence needs, relatedness needs, and growth needs. Health and physical safety are typically regarded as existence needs, while family satisfaction, social satisfaction, and leisure satisfaction are considered important relatedness needs. Ultimately, growth needs are important, as they influence quality of daily life. He argued that when needs in a higher category are not satisfied, people double their efforts to satisfy needs in a lower category. When their needs are satisfied, they are motivated to strive to satisfy needs in a higher category. Because the priority of a needs category differs between people, this study considered that marriage migrant women could have different existence, relatedness, and growth needs. Following and slightly modifying the human needs classification, we categorized the human needs factors affecting the quality of life as family factors, relational factors, and social factors. These three factors were reconstructed by merging various individual needs based on the practical difficulties experienced by marriage migrant women in Korea (Im, Lee, & Lee, 2014; Kim, 2010; Lee, Ji, Ju, & Cho, 2013; Lee, Seol, & Cho, 2006; Seol, 2006). Family factors include cohabitation and satisfaction with one's husband. Social factors consist of Korean language proficiency and experience of discrimination. Relationships with compatriots and Korean friends or acquaintances are designated as relational factors. This was based on the assumption that satisfaction of existence, growth, and relatedness needs would have positive effects on the quality of life.

For marriage migrant women, the role of the husband is very important. According to a study by Hong and Lee (2016), marriage migrant women experience heavy stress adjusting to the new environment and learning the foreign culture. Lower education levels and higher dissatisfaction with marriage have more negative effects on self-esteem and quality of life. A study by Kim et al. (2012) additionally claimed

partner satisfaction as an important factor in the life satisfaction of marriage migrant women. Many marriage migrant women in Korea are mainly placed in the environment where they are treated unfairly from family and society. They are often put into circumstances physically caring their much older and authoritarian husband (Seol, 2006). Isolated from the newly arriving Korean society, their physical safety and psychological reliance to their husband and the in-law family strongly influence on the quality of life of these women.

Meanwhile, Kang (2013) discussed the importance of relational factors, contending that relationships with others mean more to marriage migrant women than a familiar acquaintance and are an important influence on the quality of life. Furthermore, the importance of relationships with others to marriage migrant women enables them to earn the opportunity and resources to solve daily needs and issues through relationships. This creates “social capital,” which can help individuals by offering emotional support and forming a social network that provides the necessary information and support for work and life (Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981; Granovetter, 1983; Delechat, 2001). The relationship with friends and neighbors, outside the family members, is regarded as an important factor in building supportive networks providing the sense of belongingness and the outlet to appeal marriage conflicts (Choi et al., 2012). Therefore, the study expects that the marriage migrant women’s positive relationship with their Korean acquaintances and compassionate friends would serve to improve their quality of life.

A sense of social belonging is also a basic human need, and Korean language proficiency may be an important tool in increasing the sense of belonging to Korean society. In reality, language can explain the level of integration in a respective society, and the better the linguistic ability, the more convenient it is to live in this society (Yang, 2014). One study found that immigrants adept at using the language of the new country have a higher quality of life (Lee & Moon, 2015). On the other hand, if marriage migrant women face discrimination within society, their sense of social belonging will be lost and desire for recognition destroyed. Many studies claim that immigrants who face discrimination have a lower quality of life (Zhang et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2015). Many Koreans, who have lived long in a very ethnically homogeneous society, are still reluctant to accept marriage migrant women as full members of the Korean society. Moreover, various public programs such as teaching Korean language and helping cultural assimilation are also designed from the perspective of Korean people (Kim, 2010). Nevertheless, Korean language proficiency should be critical in allowing migrant marriage women to communicate with other people and so build social relations.

Based on the discussion of ERG theory and related literature, the following

hypotheses were formulated:

***H1: Family factors will have positive effects on the quality of life of marriage migrant women.***

*H1-1: Cohabitation with husband will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

*H1-2: Satisfaction with husband will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

***H2: Relational factors will have positive effects on the quality of life of marriage migrant women.***

*H2-1: Relationships with compatriots will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

*H2-2: Relationships with Koreans will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

***H3: Social factors will have positive/negative effects on the quality of life of marriage migrant women.***

*H3-1: Korean language proficiency will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

*H3-2: Experience of discrimination will have negative (-) effects on their quality of life.*

Last, two other factors are worthy of consideration when determining the quality of life of marriage migrant women in Korea. In this section, cultural and policy factors were examined by the multicultural perspective. Multiculturalism is “the politics of recognition” in which the majority of cultural groups recognize minority groups as groups of equal value (Taylor, 1992). In a similar vein, multicultural policies can be understood as government programs that protect the socio-cultural diversity and ensure all individuals to have equal accesses to opportunities without discrimination and exclusion based on race, ethnicity and nationality (Tropper, 1999). In this study, we examined the multicultural orientation of married immigrant women themselves and the accessibility of multicultural family support center as the government's multicultural support policy.

The first is a cultural factor. According to social identity theory, personal identity



is a self-concept in which one's behavior is influenced by individual values and desires, whereby social identity is a self-concept where behavior is influenced by members of an organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel & Turner, 1985).<sup>2</sup> This study focused on the tendency of individuals to prefer people who belong to the same group that they do, an in-group bias that is common in Korea, where racial homogeneity and bloodline are considered important (Kim, 2016). If marriage migrant women exhibit multicultural perspectives and attitudes within the Korean context, there is a high possibility that they will be excluded either visibly or invisibly by mainstream groups in the country. Since Korean society wants marriage migrant women to completely assimilate into Korean culture and values, and often distinguishes and discriminates cultures different from Korea's, the strong multicultural perspectives and attitudes of marriage migrant women will increase their difficulties within Korean society. In other words, Korea has long been a bloodline society proud of being a homogeneous nation. Within this type of society, foreigners are met with closed attitudes and expected to discard the culture of their country of origin, learn Korean culture, and completely assimilate to live in their society. However, if marriage migrant women were to preserve their own culture while acquiring Korean culture from a multiculturalist perspective, and assume a multicultural orientation that respects both cultures, cognitive dissonance would emerge between the atmosphere of Korean society and their individual values. This would make it extremely difficult to adjust to Korean society, and the level of life satisfaction would decline.

The other factor pertains to policy. We examined the impact of access to Multicultural Family Support Center on marriage migrants' assimilation. Multicultural Family Support Centers were established by the state as institutions to address difficulties in the lives of migrant women. As the number of marriage migrant women increase and their difficulties in life become social issues, there has been a sharp rise in the number of Multicultural Family Support Centers, and related support programs have become more diverse. As of January 2017, 217 centers were established nationwide. At Multicultural Family Support Centers, education programs and consulting centers are available to help adjustment to Korean life. Considering that societal support plays an important role in changing the mental attitudes of marriage migrant women (Kim, 2011), it is predicted that the use of Multicultural Family Support Centers greatly influences the lives of these women. In particular, based on the interview

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2. Personal identity is a self-concept represented by the personality, values, and physical traits a person displays in an interpersonal relationship. Social identity is the self-concept created by a person's participation in a social group, which leads the person to treasure the "in-group" and to build an affectional relationship within the group.



results of a study by Chung and Yoo (2013), Multicultural Family Support Centers positively contribute to resolving marriage migrant women's initial sense of disappointment and loss by providing opportunities for Korean language education and job training. Multicultural Family Support Centers are becoming key community resources that constitute an integral part of life for marriage migrant women.

Drawing on the discussion of social identity theory and related literature, the following hypotheses were formulated:

***H4: Cultural and policy factors will have positive/negative effects on the quality of life of marriage migrant women.***

*H4-1: Multicultural orientation will have negative (-) effects on their quality of life.*

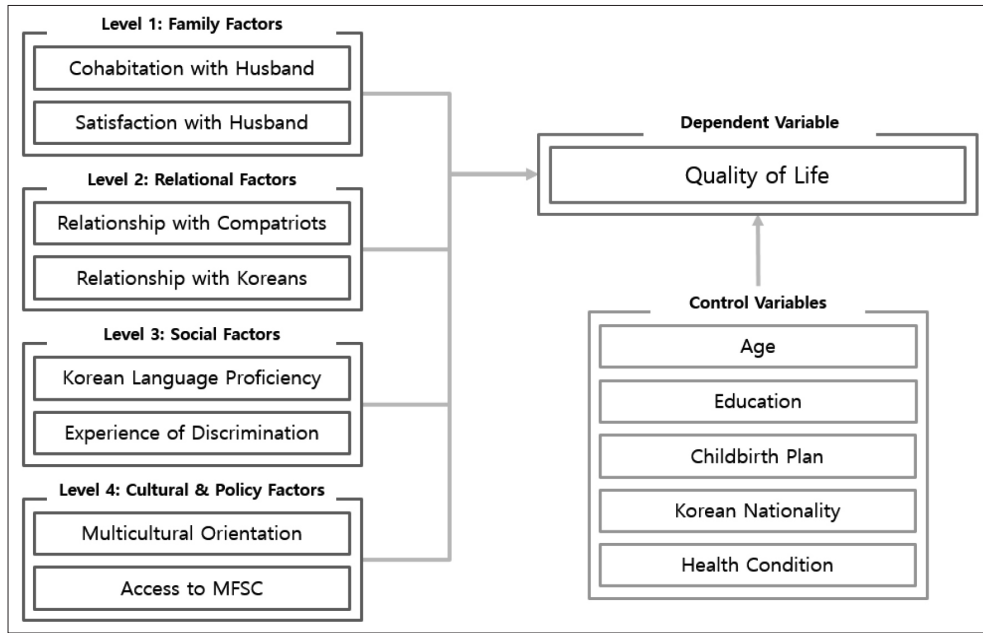
*H4-2: Access to Multicultural Family Support Center will have positive (+) effects on their quality of life.*

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Research Model**

To investigate the relationships among the variables and verify the hypotheses, this study developed the research model shown in Figure 1. To identify the influence of various independent variables by level, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. First, control variables including age, education, childbirth plan, Korean nationality, and health condition, which could strongly affect the lives of marriage migrant women, were included. Second, cohabitation and satisfaction with husband, which are family factors, were included as the independent variables for level 1. Third, relationships with compatriots and with Koreans, which are relational factors, were included as the independent variables for level 2. Fourth, Korean language proficiency and experience of discrimination, which are social factors, were included as the independent variables for level 3. Fifth, multicultural orientation and access to a Multicultural Family Support Center, which are cultural and policy factors, were included as the independent variables for level 4. . Last, we used quality of life as a dependent variable.

**Figure 1.** Research Model



\*MFSC: Multicultural Family Support Center

### Sample Characteristics

This study utilized the datasets from “A Study on the National Survey of Multicultural Families 2015” collected by the Korean Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. The survey was conducted to identify the condition and status of multicultural families nationwide and construct the basic statistics needed to establish related policies. Therefore, it was judged the most suitable data for the analysis in this study. In total, 6,381 samples were used in this study. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. With respect to nationality at birth, 868 respondents were Chinese (13.6%), 1,557 were Korean Chinese (24.4%), 1,337 were Filipinos (21.0%), and 2,619 were Vietnamese (41.0%). Regarding residential area, 2,496 people lived in rural areas (39.1%) and 3,885 in urban areas (60.9%). As for age, 2,283 respondents were in their 20s (35.8%), 2,201 in their 30s (34.5%), 1,196 in their 40s (18.7%), 530 in their 50s (8.3%), and 171 in their 60s or older (2.7%). Regarding education level, 74 respondents did not attend school (1.2%), 521 attended elementary school (8.2%), 1,548 middle school (24.3%), 2,884 high school (45.2%), 689 two-year college (10.8%), 614 four-year college (9.6%), and 233 graduate school (0.8%).

**Table 1.** Sample Characteristics

Characteristics	Specification	Frequency	%
Nationality at Birth	Chinese	868	13.6
	Korean Chinese	1,557	24.4
	Filipino	1,337	21.0
	Vietnamese	2,619	41.0
Residential Area	Rural	2,496	39.1
	Urban	3,885	60.9
Age	20s	2,283	35.8
	30s	2,201	34.5
	40s	1,196	18.7
	50s	530	8.3
	Over 60s	171	2.7
Education	no schooling	74	1.2
	elementary school	521	8.2
	middle school	1,548	24.3
	high school	2,884	45.2
	two-year college	689	10.8
	four-year college	614	9.6
	graduate school	233	0.8
Total		6,381	100.0

### Variable Measurement

Table 2 shows the questionnaire items for all variables except the age and education control variables. Relationship with compatriots and relationship with Koreans were nominal measures of whether anyone other than family members were able to help when needed in three particular situations; thus, they were used after being recoded as sequential measures so that the linear model could be applied. Korean language proficiency was extracted as an average of four detailed questions on speaking, listening, reading, and writing. All other items were composed of single items and used for reverse coding or as dummy variables for ease of analysis.

**Table 2.** Variable Measurement

Variables	Survey Items
Childbirth Plan	Do you plan to have more children?
Korean Nationality	Do you have Korean citizenship?
Health Condition	What is your general health status?
Cohabitation with Husband	Do you currently live with your spouse?
Satisfaction with Husband	How satisfied are you with the relationship with your spouse?
Relationship with Compatriots	Do you have anyone in your home country besides your family members that can help you in the following situations? (Someone to talk to when there is difficulty with your personal or home life / Someone you can participate in hobbies with / Someone you can ask for help when you are physically ill)
Relationship with Koreans	Do you have anyone in Korea besides your family members that can help you in the following situations? (Someone to talk to when there is difficulty with your personal or home life / Someone you can participate in hobbies with / Someone you can ask for help when you are physically ill)
Korean Language Proficiency	How proficient are you in Korean? (Speaking / Listening / Reading / Writing)
Experience of Discrimination	Have you ever been discriminated against during the time you have lived in Korea because you are a foreigner?
Multicultural Orientation	How do you feel about the following? (If a foreigner wants to stay in Korea, he/she has to abandon their own culture and adopt the Korean culture) 1: Strongly agree ↔ 6: Strongly disagree
Access to Multicultural Family Support Center	Are you aware of the existence of the Multicultural Family Support Centers, and if so have you used them in the past?
Quality of Life	Overall, how satisfied are you with your life?

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Correlation Analysis

To identify the correlations among the research variables, we conducted a correlation analysis was conducted, as shown in Table 3. Specifically, to control for the influence of control variables and accurately examine the correlations between the main research variables in this study, we performed a partial correlation analysis. We

controlled for age, education, childbirth plan, Korean nationality, and health condition were controlled in advance. Among the independent variables, cohabitation with husband, satisfaction with husband, relationship with compatriots, relationship with Koreans, and Korean language proficiency were positively correlated with quality of life. Experience of discrimination and multicultural orientation were negatively correlated with quality of life. Only having access to Multicultural Family Support Center was not statistically significantly correlated with quality of life.

**Table 3.** Correlation Analysis

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
A	1								
B	.072***	1							
C	-.007	.005	1						
D	.038***	.090***	-.251***	1					
E	-.004	.120***	-.040***	.215***	1				
F	-.023*	-.094***	.033***	-.047***	-.040***	1			
G	.005	-.036***	.050***	-.015	-.027**	-.025**	1		
H	.028**	-.029**	.077***	-.042***	-.180***	.038***	.036***	1	
I	.061***	.505***	.024*	.095***	.092***	-.104***	-.053***	.005	1

A: Cohabitation with Husband, B: Satisfaction with Husband, C: Relationship with Compatriots, D: Relationship with Koreans, E: Korean Language Proficiency, F: Experience of Discrimination, G: Multicultural Orientation, H: Access to Multicultural Family Support Center, I: Quality of Life  
 \*: p<.10, \*\*: p<.05, \*\*\*: p<.01

### Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

This study examined how family, relational, social, and cultural and policy factors affect marriage migrant women’s quality of life. In particular, the study focused on marriage migrant women from China, the Philippines, and Vietnam to capture common characteristics in the Asian context. To investigate the research hypotheses and identify various factors in separate stages, we performed a hierarchical multiple regression. In the first step of this analysis, the five variables were included as control variables. In the second, third, fourth, and fifth steps, two variables were added as the main independent variables by separate factors.

The result of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis of marriage migrant women in urban areas is shown in Table 4. Integrating the analysis results, first, among the control variables, childbirth plan, Korean nationality, and health condition

had a meaningful impact on quality of life. Second, for family factors, cohabitation with husband and satisfaction with husband had a positive impact on quality of life. Third, for relational factors, relationship with compatriots and relationship with Koreans had a positive impact on quality of life. Fourth, for social factors, only experience of discrimination had a negative impact on quality of life. Last, for cultural and policy factors, multicultural orientation had a negative impact on quality of life, and access to Multicultural Family Support Center had a positive impact. Therefore, in terms of marriage migrant women in urban areas, H1-1, H1-2, H2-1, H2-2, H3-2, H4-1, and H4-2 were supported, while H3-1 was rejected.

**Table 4.** Hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Respondents in urban areas)

	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 1)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 2)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 3)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 4)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 5)
A	.025	-.004	-.006	-.010	-.005
B	.032**	.002	-.006	-.004	-.005
C	.102***	.030**	.031**	.030**	<b>.032**</b>
D	-.068***	-.049***	-.054***	-.054***	<b>-.055***</b>
E	.352***	.233***	.228***	.222***	<b>.221***</b>
Level 1-1		.028**	.026**	.025**	<b>.025**</b>
Level 1-2		.492***	.485***	.481***	<b>.480***</b>
Level 2-1			.038***	.039***	<b>.039***</b>
Level 2-2			.065***	.063***	<b>.063***</b>
Level 3-1				.004	.008
Level 3-2				-.045***	<b>-.046***</b>
Level 4-1					<b>-.029**</b>
Level 4-2					<b>.029**</b>
F	145.456***	339.787***	268.970***	221.787***	188.747***
R Square	.158	.380	.385	.386	.388

Durbin-Watson: 2.061

A: Age, B: Education, C: Childbirth Plan, D: Korean Nationality, E: Health Condition, Level 1-1: Cohabitation with Husband, Level1-2: Satisfaction with Husband  
 Level 2-1: Relationship with Compatriots, Level2-2: Relationship with Koreans  
 Level 3-1: Korean Language Proficiency, Level3-2: Experience of Discrimination  
 Level 4-1: Multicultural Orientation, Level4-2: Access to Multicultural Family Support Center  
 \*: p<.10, \*\*: p<.05, \*\*\*: p<.01

The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis of marriage migrant women in rural areas are provided in Table 5. Integrating the analysis results, first, among the control variables, age, childbirth plan, and health condition had a meaningful impact on quality of life. Second, for family factors, only satisfaction with husband had a positive impact on quality of life. Third, for relational factors, only relationship with compatriots had a positive impact on quality of life. Fourth, for social factors, Korean language proficiency had a positive impact on quality of life, and experience of discrimination had a negative impact. Last, for cultural and policy factors, only multicultural orientation had a negative impact on quality of life. Therefore, in terms of marriage migrant women in rural areas, H1-2, H2-1, H3-1, H3-2, and H4-1 were supported, and H1-1, H2-2, and H4-2 rejected.

**Table 5.** Hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Respondents in rural areas)

	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 1)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 2)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 3)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 4)	Standardized Coefficient $\beta$ (Step 5)
A	-.012	-.031**	-.035*	-.050***	<b>-.054***</b>
B	.057***	.010	.007	.007	.009
C	.092***	.043**	.041**	.040**	<b>.037**</b>
D	-.018	-.001	-.005	-.018	-.019
E	.321***	.225***	.221***	.211***	<b>.212***</b>
Level 1-1		.007	.006	.006	.005
Level 1-2		.476***	.472***	.461***	<b>.460***</b>
Level 2-1			.027	.028	<b>.030*</b>
Level 2-2			.040**	.028	.027
Level 3-1				.054***	<b>.055***</b>
Level 3-2				-.058***	<b>-.061***</b>
Level 4-1					<b>-.050***</b>
Level 4-2					.010
F	73.038***	182.519***	142.897***	119.778***	102.395***
R Square	.128	.339	.341	.347	.349

Durbin-Watson: 2.021

A: Age, B: Education, C: Childbirth Plan, D: Korean Nationality, E: Health Condition,  
 Level 1-1: Cohabitation with Husband, Level1-2: Satisfaction with Husband  
 Level 2-1: Relationship with Compatriots, Level2-2: Relationship with Koreans  
 Level 3-1: Korean Language Proficiency, Level3-2: Experience of Discrimination  
 Level 4-1: Multicultural Orientation, Level4-2: Access to Multicultural Family Support Center  
 \*: p<.10, \*\*: p<.05, \*\*\*: p<.01



## CONCLUSION

This study empirically investigated the effects of family, relational, social, and cultural and policy factors on the quality of life of marriage migrant women in Korea. To this end, the literature and relevant theories were reviewed, and a correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis conducted. This study also examined the importance of place of residence in urban or rural areas. The results of this study are summarized below.

First, among the control variables, childbirth plan, Korean nationality, and health condition had significant effects on the quality of life of marriage migrant women in urban areas. On the other hand, in the case of rural residents, quality of life was higher when marriage migrant women were younger, healthier, and had a childbirth plan. As the analysis results show, marriage migrant women's health and childcare issues are a common focus in both urban and rural areas. However, some differences in the analysis results indicate that their quality of life is influenced by the residential area. Because the needs of marriage migrant women could differ according to residential area, the Korean government should take a customized and discriminatory policy approach based on their residential circumstances.

Second, examining family factors revealed that regardless of residence, the quality of life of marriage migrant women was higher when they were satisfied with their husbands. For urban residents, living with their husband specifically enhanced quality of life. This finding confirms those of existing studies that satisfaction with family members, especially satisfaction and a positive relationship with husband, are critical factors in increasing the happiness and life satisfaction of marriage migrant women (Yoo et al., 2012). Couples in multicultural families can experience much conflict due to difference in culture, age, and values. This common finding suggests that marital counseling programs need to be a part of government policies. In particular, Korean husbands need education programs they can attend that will teach them about the culture and values of their wife's country of origin.

Third, among the relational factors, closeness with compatriots had a positive effect on marriage migrant women's quality of life, regardless of residential area. However, relationships with Koreans had a positive effect only on women living in urban areas. Here, for marriage migrant women, intimacy with compatriots alleviated the loneliness experienced in a foreign country and enabled building a mental bond with people from a familiar culture. Furthermore, it is important in terms of quality of life, because they can freely exchange information on life in Korea and accumulate social assets without facing a language barrier. On the other hand, it is more common for marriage migrant women in urban areas to actively participate in economic and

social activities. In this case, in addition to the information or mental stability gained from compatriots, information on Korea from Koreans, or a sense of belonging to a Korean group are important. Therefore, relationships with Koreans greatly affect the quality of life of marriage migrant women in urban areas. It is beneficial for them to maintain a balanced sense of closeness with both compatriots and Korean people to successfully adapt to life in Korea and lead a happy life. Additional efforts to build relationships with Koreans and compatriots are needed to learn the culture of other people, interact, and be integrated while retaining their own culture.

The Korean government is implementing various events and programs to enable Koreans and marriage migrant women to communicate. Local governments run programs such as the “Heart-Mom Connection” where Korean women serve as Korean “mothers” to immigrant women; through the program, they learn about Korean food and experience Korean culture together, and it even offers emotional and mental health support during childbirth or holiday periods.<sup>3</sup> These systems are programs that could alleviate marriage migrant women’s longing for family and the loneliness they feel in a foreign country. However, in addition to these systems, a support system appropriate for the situation or age of marriage migrant women is needed. Many marriage migrant women come to Korea as young as in their early 20s, and give birth and lead their lives. Since they are so young, they want to enjoy the culture of young Korean women. For this reason, when supporting a network with Koreans, a connection is needed with a person suitable to their age and situation, a person of similar age, or one who can share child-rearing challenges.

Fourth, as social factors, it was confirmed that regardless of area of residence, the quality of life of marriage migrant women decreased when experience of discrimination increased. It was also found that higher Korean language proficiency enhanced the quality of life of only marriage migrant women in rural areas. For marriage migrant women living in small rural areas, there is no way of communicating with Koreans if a language barrier exists, since there are not many compatriots in the area. However, marriage migrant women living in a big city can enjoy wide interaction with compatriots or foreign people, and even engage in economic activity to a certain extent without Korean language ability. For this reason, Korean language proficiency only showed meaningful results for marriage migrant women in rural areas. However, unfortunately, it is more difficult to access Korean education centers or other types of policy support in small rural areas. The government should examine active measures to enable Korean education in small rural regions.

Fifth, as a cultural factor, it was found that regardless of residence, the quality of

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3. See <http://news.newsway.co.kr/2015.10.16> (in Korean).

life of marriage migrant women decreased when multicultural orientation increased. Korea demands that migrants assimilate, and requires them to abandon their cultures and adopt the Korean culture. In Korean society, a high multicultural orientation that respects diversity accompanies internal and external conflict, which decreases the quality of life. This indicates that Korean society should enhance multicultural acceptance, and foster respect and consideration for other cultures. Basic education on multiculturalism is crucial for this improvement in perception and culture. Furthermore, efforts must be made to benchmark cases of the education and recognition improvement campaigns of other countries that dealt with multicultural societies earlier and created a social atmosphere that enables higher multicultural acceptance.

Finally, for marriage migrant women living in urban areas, quality of life was higher with enhanced access to a Multicultural Family Support Center, in contrast to marriage migrant women in rural areas, for whom no meaningful results were obtained. Although Multicultural Family Support Centers are distributed nationwide, people in farming or island areas still experience difficulties in using them. It is necessary to offer further support such as expanding “visiting services” or “IT video services (counseling, education)” in areas with lower access to Multicultural Family Support Centers like farming or island areas. In addition, to increase the use of these centers, diversifying the programs and offering incentives for using the center are methods worthy of consideration.

For Korea to attain a mosaic society that harmonizes with integration, while maintaining the unique culture and identity of each country, it is necessary to reflect on the fundamental issue of the failure of multicultural policies. Furthermore, it is essential to provide marriage migrant women with what they need to adjust to Korea, establish active policies to allow native Koreans to understand and accept a multicultural society, and make efforts to redirect Korean society towards a fundamental understanding and accommodation of diverse cultures.

This study is significant in that it conducted an analysis based on multidimensional determinants of quality of life as a way of ascertaining the direction administrative policies need to go in to address marriage migrant’s difficulties in adjusting to Korean society. Furthermore, it provides policy proposals in each section. Nevertheless, this study also has limitations. First, there is a common method bias, because all the questions on the survey were answered by the same person at the same time. Second, it is also limited because it relies only on quantitative data, despite the fact that the determinants of the quality of life it uses are specific and take psychology into account. This study will need to be supplemented by future research that adopts various methods. Third, due to the limitations of the survey data we used, whether using the Multicultural Family Support Center is beneficial to married migrant women or

not is not properly examined. The Multicultural Family Support Center as a policy factor, is one of the government's key policies to support married immigrant women and multicultural families. A future survey focusing on multicultural family support centers is in need to suggest policy alternatives for a more area-specific center location and customized programs. Lastly, this study did not consider potential factors such as family conflicts, child education, and economic income that would affect the quality of life of migrant marriage women. Policy factors are not sufficiently examined due to the shortage of survey data. Omitting the in-depth interviews to cross-check the statistical findings on their quality of life remains to be a shortcoming of this paper. Future studies should consider various factors that may affect the quality of life of married migrant women.

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