

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Korean Female Immigrants' Lived Experience with Depression

A Phenomenological Study

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment
of
the requirements for a Masters of Philosophy in Psychology
at Massey University, Albany Campus, New Zealand.

Simon Seung Wook Lee

2002

Abstract

The aim of this study lies in describing and interpreting the meanings of Korean female immigrants' lived experience of depression. Depression is the most frequently occurring mental health diagnosis amongst immigrants. Waves of Korean immigrants have flocked to New Zealand for the last decade, and now the Korean language is the most common language after English in North Shore city. It is believed that a study on Korean female immigrants' mental health needs to be addressed by clinical professionals and mental health workers. Six Korean females who had lived for more than one year in New Zealand, and had once experienced depression were voluntarily selected and interviewed. The data was analysed by the following hermeneutic framework. The first chapter states the justification and impetus of the study, and the position of the researcher. It also contains an explanation about the focus and objectives of the study. The second chapter is dedicated to offering an opportunity to understand Korean culture in relation to the study's aim. The main social philosophy, religion, and norms are introduced to provide the reader with a better picture of Korean culture. The third chapter presents philosophical guidance for a hermeneutic study, and discusses how the framework has been applied to the study. The process of collecting and analyzing data and the ethical considerations that protect the participants' human rights and dignity are the main focus of this chapter. The findings section discusses four main themes which were classified to capture the core meaning of the participant's experiences. The last chapter discusses the limitations and recommendations that have emerged from the study.

Notes

Italics: The interview data from the study participants

Names: Pseudonyms in Korean are used to protect the clients' anonymity.

As English is not my first language, my proof readers, Emma and Leisa helped considerably to change my English into grammatically correct written English.

Acknowledgements

I do not think that this study could have been accomplished without my supervisor, Associate Professor Kerry Chamberlain. He has not only supported me academically, but also helped me get over personal difficulties. While I was researching and producing this study, I had to say goodbye to my mother who was a typical Korean woman, forever. While I struggled with, and suffered from, the grieving process, Kerry helped me with not only academic support, but with emotional empathy. I really would like to thank him for this.

Of course, without the participants who willingly involved themselves in the interviews, this study could not have been produced. I would like to thank all of them deeply for their bravery and participation.

As this study is for my second Masters degree, my children have had to put up with their Father's absence on many occasions. I did know of, and understand my daughter Grace's desire to be with me, but I have not been able to satisfy her wishes. I am sorry Grace, and I thank you for your patience. For my son, Jay, I will now have more time to play with you, so I look forward to that. And for my wife Christine, I would like to say "I love you and thank you for being my wife".

I also dedicate this study to my big sister, who is my sanctuary.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to

김 영 자 My mother,

이 혜 경 My sister,

최 명 희 My wife,

All of whom are typical Korean women,

and

all help me accomplish my life everyday.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Notes	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
Chapter one – Introduction	1
A summary of my personal and professional position	2
The Impetus for the study	3
A glance at other studies on this issue	5
Focus of Inquiry	5
Objectives of the study	7
A brief overview of the chapters	7
Chapter two – Cultural Understanding	8
A brief introduction to Korea	8
Buddhism	9
Confucianism and Korean Women	11
Acculturation: from mono-ethnic culture to multi-ethnic culture	13
Korean's own way to express depression	14
Summary	17
Chapter Three – Methodology and Methods	17
Understanding the philosophy of phenomenology and its application	17
Why Use Phenomenology?	19
Hermeneutic Inquiry	19

Employing the Participants	21
Ethical Consideration	24
Collecting and Analyzing Data	25
Rigour	28
Summary	30

Chapter Four – Findings 31

Being Disabled	32
New Land became a Desert Island	38
Being dead while still living	46
A new horizon	53
Summary	57

Chapter Five – Discussion and Limitations 59

The Four Lived Concepts	59
Implications of the study's findings	66
Limitation of this study	69
Recommendation	70
Conclusion: My own journey	71

Appnedices

Appendix A

Appendix B

Appendix C

Appendix D

References