



Bibliotherapy to Improve Self-Esteem of Minority Children from Multicultural Families in Korea

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Abstract: In Korea, population of multicultural minority children is increasing every year. However, the language limit and cultural differences of their parents, mostly their marriage immigrant mothers, prevent their children with low self-esteem from adapting themselves to schools as well as to society in Korea. A pilot study of bibliotherapy for minority kids was conducted to improve their self-esteem at primary grades of an afterschool program center in multicultural context. 3 researchers in a pilot study visited 3 times a week to read them self-help picture books printed in Chinese, Vietnamese, Thai, Cambodia. The results presented several findings. Children's self-esteems with bibliotherapy were improved. Most of children clearly addressed their anxiety and worries on marital status of their parents. They clearly revealed their needs and interests in reading multilingual picture books to be published in their mother tongue. Further studies need to be followed in depth and integrative approach to empower minority children and multicultural families.

Key words: bibliotherapy, self-esteem, minority children, international marriage, L1.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study is to find out whether “bibliotherapy” plays an important role in promoting self-esteem of minority children with marriage immigrant mothers in Korea. The second is to find out whether they show their interests in reading picture books in multi-languages.

Minority children from multicultural families in Korean society

Population of minority children from multicultural families has been increasing since int'l marriages during/after Korean war in 1950's, 3D job workers' immigrants in 1980's, and now serious social phenomena of marriage immigrants in 1990's. 43,121 int'l marriages in 2005, over 90,000 in 2006, and 100,000 in 2008. The majority of immigrant women are from Asia, Russia, and USA. The population will be up to over 266,000 in 2015 and 354,000 in year of 2020.

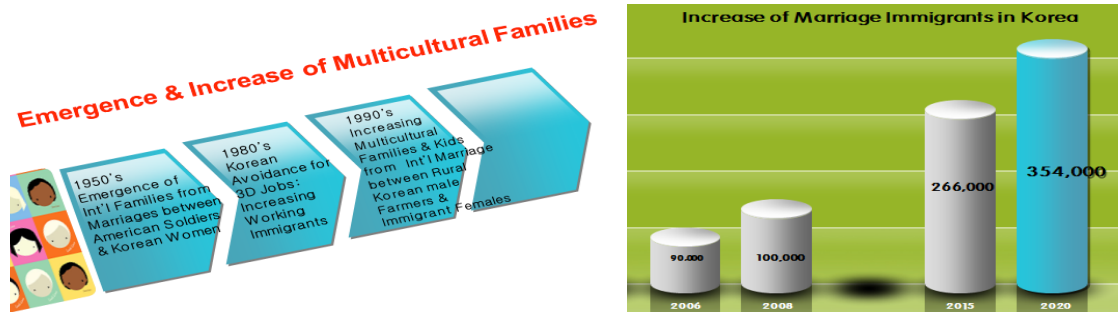


Fig. 1. Emergence & Increase of Multicultural Families. Fig. 2. Increase of Marriage Immigrants in

Korea

Problems of Minority Children of Marriage Immigrant Parents are reported that minority kids show inferior complex, low self-esteem, low school achievement, negative feeling on marriage, maladjustment to Korean society, etc. (Korean Ministry of Health & Welfare, 2005). Immigrant mothers do not adjust to competitive society on children's education and promoting their life style out of their limited time and low communication proficiency in Korean.

Bibliotherapy to meet needs of minority children

Bibliotherapy uses healing power of books in order to improve personal health and growth with insightful understanding of themselves. Bibliotherapy with picture books help children i) to alleviate unhealthy feeling & attitude such as anxiety, depression, isolations, & sense of loss, ii) to gain insight into their own life situation with problem-solving, iii) to increase self-esteem, iv) to develop empathy with others (Doll and Doll, 1997; Franson, 2009; Hart, 2009; Jeffers, 2009; Nicoladis, et al., 2006; Pardeck & Pardeck, 1989; Prater et al., 2006). Reading materials for bibliotherapy is an essential for successful therapy. Book/materials should contain universal themes for clear and concise identification with relevance to therapeutic goals.

A case study fo bibliotherapy on minority children in Seoul, Korea


Participants were 6 primary graders at multicultural afterschool childcare center. They were the children of 3 Japanese marriage immigrant mothers, 1 Mongolian, Chinese, and 1 Filipino. During total 9 sessions with pre- and post-test session and






therapeutic 7 sessions include reading, sharing their feelings, & related activities after reading were provided for 60-90 minutes per session at multicultural childcare center with after-school programs 3 times a week.

Goals of the bibliotherapy was to provide natural and safe experiences with multicultural picture books that deal with their emotional stress and to promote their self-esteem with multicultural picture books available. Bibliotherapy with therapeutic picture books, activities, & materials were “You are special” by Max Lucado in animation & book, “Doggie’s Pooh” by Jungsaeng Kwon, and “The Strongest Hen All Over the World” by Eokbae Lee used during 2-3 session per each.

Table 1. Bilbiotherapeutic Goals, Books, Activities of Each Session for Minority Children in Korea

Sessions	Topics	Therapeutic Goals	Books	Contents of Activities	Materials
1	Hello!	Greetings Introduce Prog & members Diagnose the students	Pre-Test	Greet Each other Introduce my name, age, hobby Watch “Your are special” Draw HTP/KFD & Fill SSCT, Self-esteem inventory	Name cards Pre-test tools Pencils/pens
2		Find that I am unique & special	Animation “You are special” 	Watch/Read “You are special” Talk about impressive feeling on the story Write/Draw my feelings/reflections on handouts Find/Talk/Write about special things of myself nobody can replace.	Camcorder Name cards Animation Color pens/pencils Activity handouts
3	I Am Unique & Special!	Recognize & Express “I am unique & special because...” Share that I am unique & special	Book <i>You are special</i> Handouts for the last session	Read “You are special” again in book version Share my feelings/ thoughts I express in the handouts on “You are special”. Talk/Express personal reflections/ feelings on impressive characters/their behaviors/events/scenes in the story. Pretend to become the mayor, Punchello, Lucia and speak out what you think about dots and stars. Find why I am unique & special and make 10 lists with my parents Find why my peers are special.	Same as above Animation file “You are special”



4	I Am Worthy & Precious!	Find/Recognize that I am worthy and precious	Animation <i>Doggie's Pooh</i> by Jungsaeng Kwon	Watch animation <i>Doggie's Pooh</i> Express my feelings, impressive dialogue of or scenes of the stories according to therapeutic questions.	Same as above Animation file <i>Doggie's Pooh</i>
5		Recognize/Accept that my ethnic background is very worthy & precious	Book <i>Doggie's Pooh</i> in multilingual versions 	Get interested in <i>Doggie's Pooh</i> in different languages including my mother tongue. Find characteristics of different languages. Recognize/share why books of different language & L1 were needed for them. Express my feelings, impressive dialogue of or scenes of the stories I found similar to myself Think/Share what/to whom I can do for others when other need me	Same as above Multilingual books <i>Doggie's Pooh</i> 
6	My Wonderful Daddy	Find an importance/role of my daddy in my family	Korean book <i>The Strongest Hen All over the World</i> by Eokbae Lee 	Read/Respond to their reading the book Find an important role and position of my dad in my family Fold a daddy hen with a colored paper	Power point book <i>The Strongest Hen</i> Color papers Color Paper
7		Experience my daddy with myself		Read the book again Play a role play with animal masks with peers Share my experiences/feelings after role play for understanding my daddy in my family Express my thoughts to my daddy if I were my daddy for myself	Power point book <i>The Strongest Hen</i> Animal character masks
8		Make my own wish for my daddy to be		Make my own small booklet "My Strongest Hen all over the World"	PP picture book Small booklet materials
9	Post Test	Evaluate the effectiveness of short term bibliotherapy for minority children	Post-Test	Evaluate the promotion of children's self-esteem through experiences of empathy, self-expression, positive perspective to see themselves from different ethnic background	Post-Test materials HTP, KFD, SSCT, Self-esteem inventory

Results

First, improvement of Self-Esteem of minority children has been well observed on screening tests. Melody revealed positive, more stable emotions, and thoughts related to her self-esteem. Her responses on tests were changed as follows:

My mother is Filipino => My mother is pretty.



My family don't expect much from me => My family expect much from me.
My family don't seem to understand myself => My family seem to understand...
Mostly I don't speak in need => Mostly I speak in need.
In most case, I have difficulties to deal with => In most case, I do not have diff...
I will study harder/want to be prettier when I get older => I will be married when...

Jean with an attractive appearance like her Mongolian mother showed similarity in her improvement of self-esteem. Her responses have changed with similarity.

My dad is too busy => My dad is cool.
My day is scary => My dad is nice to me.
Adults make me angry/mad => They make me scared.
I hate to get younger again => I will be happy to be get younger again.
I don't think I am happy => I think I am happy.
I want to be other person => I am happy as I am.

Young, an active and lovely girl with Japanese mother, presented her promotion of her self-esteem with changes of her attitude, feelings, and thoughts on several items on each test although she kept negative marriage issue. Changes in her response on her SEI were made on several items below.

I don't get along with others => I get along with others well.
My family don't understand me => My family do understand me.
I easily give up things => I seldom give up things.
People don't love me much => People love me much.
I don't think I am happy => I think I am happy.
I want to be other person => I am happy as I am.

Second, natural expression of negative attitudes & anxiety of marital status of the children's parent were well revealed. Melody with improved positive self-esteem revealed her anxiety and concerns on unstable marital discord between her parents. She expressed her inner worries about health of her parents and her preference in Korean food with her recognition of dominant culture of Korean. Jeans produced similar response with her hatred of marriage in the future.

I am worried that my parents would fight together.
My parents would die soon because they are old (her dad is almost 50, her mom 40).
I am afraid that a snake will bite my family to death.
It is good to eat Korean food only!

Min & Junes were also very negative on their parents' marital life. Min reluctantly took the pre-test, but quite serious at the end with reflection of his feelings and thoughts in detail that presented his anxiety and concerns on his family. His natural expression on his negative attitude and fears of his family affairs became more clear.



I will be happy if I have somebody to play with.
I hate a promise-canceller, a wife-abuser, a feeling-hurter.
I am afraid that my mother would be beaten.
I like my mom, brother, and uncle (instead of his dad).
I have a fear that my mom would commit suicide since she doesn't speak Korean well.
When my mom gets upset, she wishes to go far away leaving us for somewhere.

During 6-8th sessions, a Korean best seller *The Strongest Hen All Over the World* was read dealing with intimacy with their busy and isolated fathers. They spent most of time on working, therefore, little time on their children and spouses. Diverse activities in therapeutic context gave joyful experiences for the kids to sympathize their dads as family members, to express their inner messages to all the characters in their families. They encouraged/empowered their dads by reminding of support/love of their families. They showed their sorry/regrets for not being close to their dads and but still hope to be happy with them.

Min's younger brother wasn't satisfied with family. He opened his strong dislike of marriage on post- SSCT & SEI while he refused to fill out most of items on the pre-test. The children's negative and uncomfortable feelings implied their ambivalence and conflicts toward dysfunctions of their families as well as negative images of their dads described as strong/aggressive in appearance but weak and lonely inside. Kids' anxiety and unstable emotions were closely related with unstable family situations although they need their dads indeed as below.

I will never be married
I want my dad to treat me better

I don't feel my family love me.
My family don't understand me much.

In June's KFD without his father in his drawing he showed his dislike on his dad answering emotionally quite heavy and meaningful expression of his family situation.

Should I draw my mom and dad? (drawing his brother Min)... I'm gonna draw myself, now!! (he seemed to be tired a little finishing his drawing of his brother)... Do I have to draw the real things? Do I have to draw the real things happened? I'm not gonna draw what happened in reality...(probably his dad) just beat!
I think something bad would happen to this family
Sometime I think of the days I used to be in Japan.
I don't want to change anything from this picture!!! (pointing Min & June only).
My family will be OK... I wish to draw my dad in the picture, too!

Omitting one's family member tells significant cues. June wasn't happy or comfortable neither with his dad although he said his father was nice. There seem to be



a long distance between both in terms of perspective of family bond & psychological intimacy.



Figure 4. June's KFD (Kinetic Family Drawings) of Pre- & Post Tests

Finally, interests & needs of the children's L1 books were such a precious finding during the 5th session. The children were happy to see diverse versions of Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, & China with KOR/ENG for <Doggie's Pooh> with cheerful curiosity and interests in multilingual books. When asked "Why are multicultural books printed for whom?" They knew why and for whom these books need to be published responding as below:

That is Chinese, I know... I saw it one day... That is English. But what are the others?
Those letters look strange but interesting!
Wow! Those characters look just like an elephant blowing a trumpet!
I wish those books could be published in Filipino...
I want to read the book in Filipino with my (Korean) dad together at home!
I want to learn those languages (of Cambodia, China, Vietnam, Thai). It will be interesting!
These picture books must be published for many to be able to read in their mother tongue.
I think, more and more people need ones, those kinds of books will be published.

During the introduction and sharing the multicultural books, children's responses were beyond expectation. They looked happy and excited that they encounter their wish to happen. Although a short period of time, all the children exclaimed with joy and happiness that raise their inner needs in depth were exactly me. They felt so sorry for not having those books published in their mother tongues. But they had a hope that more multicultural books would be published when more people need ones.

Conclusion & Suggestion

Bibliotherapy for minority children was proven effective to improve self-esteem and more natural attitude of sharing feelings and hopes. Further studies are requested for careful attentions, support, programs in micro/macro-context.



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