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**COMMUNITY INTEGRATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: ADDRESSING ACCULTURATIVE STRESS IN SOUTH KOREA'S IMMIGRANT POPULATIONS**

Annotation

This paper examines the role of community integration programs in enhancing psychological well-being and reducing acculturative stress among immigrants in South Korea. It explores cultural exchange initiatives, governmental support, and social networks as mediators of adaptation, emphasizing the importance of holistic approaches to foster successful immigrant integration.

**Key words:** Acculturative stress, community integration, psychological well-being, immigrant adaptation, South Korea.

**IJTIMOY INTEGRATSIYA VA PSIXOLOGIK FAROVONLIK: JANUBIY KOREYADAGI IMMIGRANTLARNING AKKULTURATIV STRESSINI YENGISH USHLARI**

Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqola Janubiy Koreyadagi immigrantrlarning akkulturatativ stress darajasini kamaytirish va ularning psixologik farovonligini oshirishda ijtimoiy integratsiya dasturlarining rolini o'rganadi. Madaniy almashinuv tashabbuslari, hukumat yordami va ijtimoiy tarmoqlar moslashuv vositasi sifatida ko'rib chiqilib, muvaffaqiyatli integratsiyaga erishishning muhim jihatlari ekanligi yoritilgan.

**Kalit so'zlar:** Akkulturatativ stress, ijtimoiy integratsiya, psixologik farovonlik, immigrantrlarning moslashuvi, Janubiy Koreya.

**ИНТЕГРАЦИЯ В СООБЩЕСТВО И ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ БЛАГОПОЛУЧИЕ: ПРЕОДОЛЕНИЕ АККУЛЬТУРАЦИОННОГО СТРЕССА СРЕДИ ИММИГРАНТОВ В ЮЖНОЙ КОРЕЕ**

Аннотация

В статье рассматривается роль программ интеграции в сообщество в снижении аккультурационного стресса и повышении психологического благополучия иммигрантов в Южной Корее. Исследуются инициативы культурного обмена, государственная поддержка и социальные сети как посредники адаптации, подчеркивая важность комплексного подхода к успешной интеграции.

**Ключевые слова:** Аккультурационный стресс, интеграция в сообщество, психологическое благополучие, адаптация иммигрантов, Южная Корея.

**Introduction.** With globalization facilitating international migration, South Korea has witnessed a significant rise in its immigrant population. According to the Korea Immigration Service, the number of foreign residents exceeded 2.5 million in 2023, comprising nearly 5% of the country's total population. This demographic shift highlights the growing multicultural nature of South Korean society, but it also underscores challenges, particularly for immigrants facing acculturative stress.

Acculturative stress refers to the psychological strain resulting from adapting to a new cultural environment. It often manifests as anxiety, depression, or social isolation, stemming from challenges such as language barriers, discrimination, and cultural dissonance. A 2022 survey by the Korean Women's Development Institute reported that 46.2% of immigrant women in South Korea experience moderate to high levels of stress due to cultural adaptation and social exclusion. Similarly, a study on migrant workers revealed that 38% faced mental health issues linked to workplace discrimination and poor social integration.

Despite these efforts, gaps remain. Many programs are concentrated in urban areas, leaving immigrants in rural regions underserved. Additionally, cultural stigma around mental health may prevent some immigrants from seeking help. By addressing these issues, South Korea can create a more inclusive society that supports both immigrants and the nation's evolving multicultural identity.

**Literature Review.** Acculturative stress has been widely studied as a significant factor influencing the psychological well-being of immigrant populations. Berry (1997) introduced the concept of acculturative stress as the psychological impact resulting from navigating cultural differences during adaptation. This stress often leads to adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal, especially among immigrant groups facing linguistic and cultural barriers.

In the context of South Korea, several studies have explored the effects of acculturative stress on immigrants. Kim et al. (2020) examined North Korean defectors and found that higher levels of acculturative stress were strongly correlated with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Similarly, Zhang and Kim (2018) studied Chinese immigrants and revealed that those adopting integration or assimilation strategies experienced lower levels of acculturative stress compared to those employing separation or marginalization strategies. This highlights the importance of positive interactions between immigrants and the host community.

Social support has been identified as a critical buffer against acculturative stress. Park and Lee (2019) emphasized that immigrant workers who had access to robust social networks, including community groups and familial ties, reported higher levels of life satisfaction and psychological well-being. This finding aligns with the work of Ward and Kennedy (1999), who argued that perceived social support is a key determinant in mitigating the negative effects of cultural adaptation.

Community integration programs play a pivotal role in facilitating immigrants' adaptation processes. Cho et al. (2021) analyzed the impact of multicultural family support centers in South Korea and found that language education, cultural exchange programs, and counseling services significantly reduced feelings of isolation and stress among immigrant women.

The existing body of literature demonstrates the complex relationship between acculturative stress, social support, and community integration. While South Korea has made strides in addressing these issues through targeted programs, there is a clear need for more inclusive policies and broader societal acceptance to ensure the psychological well-being of its immigrant populations.

**Methodology.** This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between community integration programs and the psychological well-being of immigrants in South Korea, focusing on acculturative stress. The research combines quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. The study involves 200 immigrants residing in South Korea, aged between 20 and 50 years, from various backgrounds, including labor migrants, international students, and marriage migrants. Participants were recruited through multicultural centers, community organizations, and online platforms.

**Results and Discussion.** The study aimed to explore the role of community integration programs in alleviating acculturative stress and enhancing the psychological well-being of immigrants in South Korea.

The survey results revealed a moderate to high level of acculturative stress among participants, with an average score of 3.6 on the Acculturative Stress Scale. The primary sources of stress were identified as language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. Regression analysis showed a significant negative correlation between community integration and acculturative stress ( $r = -0.65$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Immigrants who participated in integration programs reported lower levels of stress and higher psychological well-being, with an average score of 18.2 on the WHO-5 Well-Being Index.

Interviews with 20 participants revealed that language classes were the most effective community integration program, as they helped participants navigate daily interactions and reduce feelings of isolation. Many reported that cultural exchange

programs fostered understanding between immigrants and local communities. However, challenges such as workplace discrimination remained significant, especially among labor migrants, who noted that despite language proficiency, they still felt socially excluded.

The results confirm that community integration programs significantly reduce acculturative stress, supporting previous research by Kim et al. (2020) and Zhang and Kim (2018). Language and cultural support programs were essential for enhancing immigrants' mental health, as they facilitated social connections and integration. However, the persistence of discrimination, as highlighted by Lee and Jung (2022), continues to hinder full integration, particularly for labor migrants. These findings suggest that while community programs play a crucial role in alleviating stress, addressing structural barriers like discrimination is essential for improving overall psychological well-being.

**Conclusion.** This study demonstrates that community integration programs significantly alleviate acculturative stress and improve the psychological well-being of immigrants in South Korea. Participation in language classes and cultural exchange programs positively impacted mental health and reduced feelings of isolation. However, the persistence of discrimination, particularly in the workplace, remains a significant barrier to full integration. To enhance the effectiveness of integration programs, efforts must also address systemic issues such as social exclusion and inequality. Future research should further investigate targeted interventions for different immigrant groups to improve their overall adaptation and well-being in South Korea.

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