A Discourse Map on Counseling International Students in Korea

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Abstract

The number of international students has drastically increased over a decade in Korea. And a psychological demand to make them successfully adjust their college life in Korea has also increased. Accordingly, it is necessary to explore how international student-focused counseling research has unfolded in Korea. To this end, this study provides research trend in Korea through a content analysis of 79 theses and articles published over recent two decades (1996-2016). Over 140 research contents are classified into 10 categories, including cultural adjustment, psychological health, and career and vocation as the main three categories. Frequency of conceptions or terms in each category, and relationship between those conceptions are analyzed. Based on the content analysis, a discourse map is finally drawn. Also, future research agendas are suggested.

Keywords: international students in Korea, counseling, content analysis, discourse map

Introduction

In 2000, almost 4,000 international students were enrolled in Korean higher educations (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2016). In 2015, more than 90,000 international students, including degree and non-degree courses, were enrolled to Korean universities and colleges. This number has increased 23 times over the fifteen years. During the same period, the rate of international students among ten thousand students in Korea has increased from 11.8 to 154.5 (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2017). It means that they can be more often seen on Korean campuses in recent years than ten years ago. The three largest groups of international students in 2016 in Korea were China (58%), Vietnam (7%), and Mongol (4%). The three

countries account for almost seventy percentages of international students in Korea (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2017).

International students in Korea may experience psychological problems which are common to Korean students, because especially undergraduate students, whether international or Korean, generally go through similar developmental process like the adjustment period of young adulthood (Yoon & Portman, 2004, p. 33). As well, they may have unique problems like cultural adjustment, language barrier, academic system's difference, and racism (Yoon & Portman, 2004, pp. 33-34). Thus, if helping professionals in higher educations can understand international students' real issues about psychological health and provide their copying strategies, it will be helpful for international students in successfully adjusting their university life in Korea and achieving their academic goals.

The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive outlook on counseling international students in Korea. This outlook may be clearly seen by the integrative work of previous literatures published in Korea over two decades. And the integration of literatures is required to suggest future research agendas in Korea. However, there is still an absence of exploration on the trend of international student-focused counseling researches in Korea. Such a study has been slightly dealt with as a part of overall trend of multicultural counseling studies in Korea (Oh, Choi, & Choi, 2016; Kim & Son, 2014; Lim, Jung, & Jin, 2009). Thus, we expect that this study will be the first map and a helpful guide for researchers and practitioners regarding the current status of international student counseling researches in Korea.

Research Method

As a comprehensive study, this study attempted to explore all theses for degree and all articles in academic journals published in Korea. For this end, this study utilized the RISS (Research Information Sharing Service). As a national internet search engine and database, RISS is the most frequently used and the nationally largest web-based platform for supporting academic research in Korea, which has been developed and managed by Korean Education and Research Information Service under the Ministry of Education (Research Information Sharing Service, 2017). In other words, RISS was assumed as a trustworthy pool for this study's data collection.

Research procedure is as follow: First, Data Collection: two keywords such as *international students* and *counseling* were concurrently used to search all articles and theses in RISS. As a result, 137 writings, including 45 articles and 95 theses, were collected.

Second, Exclusion: since such themes as international youths, Korean international students, and Christian counseling are not related to this study, those studies were eliminated from research pool. As a result, 79 writings, including 26 articles and 53 theses, were finally collected. Those resources were published between 1996 and

2016. Thus, 1996 was the first year of publication of international student counseling research in Korea.

Third, Content Analysis: When this study extracted contents from the 79 articles and theses, it used those titles of writings. For example, if a thesis' title is "the Impacts of Acculturation Strategies and Social Support on the Adaptation of Chinese International Students to University Life" (Jin, 2017), its contents are three things, including acculturation, social support, adaptation of university life. In this way, more than 140 contents were extracted from 79 writings. However, since previous studies on content classification and analysis of international student counseling researches were absent in Korea, this study referred to the classification used in a recent research published in the United States (Pendes & Inman, 2017). This study assumed that as basic issues of international student counseling researches were similar between US and Korea, classification of the contents would be similar despite of each category's frequency difference. The US reference research has ten content categories and their subcategories, including cultural adjustments, psychological health, and help utilization as the most common categories. Likewise, this study classified Korean research contents, using the same US categories. Based on the frequency analysis of contents, this study showed an overall trend of research contents in the next section.

Fourth, Discourse Map: the most common three contents were individually analyzed in the last section, focusing on main discourses which penetrates each content. Consequently, if those discourses are integrated, a discourse map can be drawn enough to explain a comprehensive outlook on international student counseling researches in Korea. As well, future research agendas will be suggested, based on the comprehensive outlook.

Content Analysis

First of all, this study analyzed all contents of 79 theses and articles. A word cloud picture can be drawn as Picture 1. According to word frequency, font size was different. In other words, as a specific term appears more frequently, its font size becomes larger. From the picture, hot issues in international student counseling researches can be intuitively seen and known.

Pendes and Inman (2017)'s classification of content categories was used in this study. However, this study shows that each category's frequency was slightly different between US and Korea. Consequently, Table 1 outlines the frequency and percentage of ten categories and their subcategories from the resource pool of 141 contents in 79 theses and articles. Frequencies and percentages present the portion of those writings that fall under a specific content category. A thesis or article may include more than one content category. In summary, the three content categories account for more than 75 percentages of total contents in this study. Those three categories are cultural adjustments, psychological health, and career/vocation respectively.

Among the 10 categories, cultural adjustments drew the greatest attention, accounting for 38 percentages of total contents. This category was divided into three subcategories, of which acculturation and acculturative stress represented the largest percentages (17%), and then adaptation to university life was the second largest percentages (16%). It shows that Korean researchers' primary interest has leaned toward cultural adjustments, especially toward acculturation and adaptation to university life. As the second largest content category, psychological health consisted of 7 subcategories, of which self-efficacy/esteem was the largest portion. In a sense, psychological issues should be one of the most frequent contents in counseling, as it is the reason of existence of counseling. Interestingly, the third largest content category in Korea was career/vocation, while that in the US research was helping utilization/attitudes toward help seeking (Pendes & Inman, 2017, p. 24). It seems to reflect a reality that substantive interest of international students in Korea was in their own future career and vocation.

From the above content analysis, we may tentatively infer that a general trend of international student-focused counseling researches in Korea is to explore the relationship between three main categories, that is to say, how their acculturation and adaptation to university life are related to their psychological health and their preparation for future career. This overarching insight will be more specifically explored in the next section. Primary discourses under each of those three contents will be analyzed in depth and can be summarized as a comprehensive picture.

Table 1. Content Analysis

Category/Subcategory	f	%	f	%
1. Cultural Adjustments	53	37.59		
1) Acculturation/ Acculturative stress			24	17.02
2) Adaptation to University life			22	15.60
3) Etcetera			7	4.96
2. Psychological Health	36	25.53		
1) Self-efficacy/esteem			9	6.38
2) Ego-resilience			2	1.42
3) Psychological well-being			3	2.13
4) Depression			3	2.13
5) Self-differentiation			2	1.42
6) Adult-attachment			3	2.13
7) Etcetera			14	9.93
3. Help Utilization/attitude toward help seeking	4	2.84		0.00
4. Social support/social interaction	7	4.96		0.00
5. Psychotherapy/intervention focused	6	4.26		0.00
6. Racism/discrimination	2	1.42		0.00
7. Identity	5	3.55		0.00
8. Coping	7	4.96		0.00
9. Career/vocation	19	13.48		0.00
1) Career barrier			5	3.55
2) Career decision			3	2.13
3) Major/study/learning			4	2.84
4) Etcetera			7	4.96
10. Etcetera	2	1.42		

Picture 1. Word Cloud of Contents

A Discourse Map

Discourse on Cultural adjustments (D1)

Cultural adjustment is the most attractive and the most frequently mentioned theme (37.6%, Table 1) in Korean researches on international student counseling over two decades. This is common to both American and Korean researchers. It reflects that the most important task of international students is cultural adjustments. In other words, cultural adjustment has been used as the key indicator of diagnosis and treatment in counseling international students.

Cultural adjustment consists of two subcategories, namely, acculturation and adaptation to university life. First, acculturation discourse has been unfolded, based on Berry's theory (1997). In other words, four types of acculturation – integration, assimilation, separation, marginalization – were a diagnostic taxonomy of international students or a prescriptive strategy for international students. Second, discourse on adaptation to university life has been formed, based on Baker & Siryk's theory (1984). As descriptive and prescriptive indicators for their successful adaptation, four adaptations – academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, institutional attachment – were also discovered in relation to other categories (psychological health, career, and more).

In a word, cultural adjustment accounts for essential portion in international-student-counseling discourse. It has been utilized as diagnostic and therapeutic indicator for improving international students' quality of life. However, one question still remains

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from the critical perspective of previous studies. As the absolute majority of Korean researches were about Chinese students in Korea, it may be fine to say that cultural adjustnment discourse primarily reflects a reality of Chinese international students. However, it is not appropriate that researches based on the data from Chinese international students can be generalized into discourse about all international students in Korea (Yoon & Portman, 2004, p. 35). In this sense, the following questions can be asked: although Chinese and Korean students are geographically close and philosophically based on Confucianism and physically indistinguishable, why Chinese international students have experienced those issues of cultural adjustment in Korea? And how much more serious is the cultural adjustment in Chinese students than other ethnic students? There is no answer in current discourse. In other words, the question why and how cultural adjustment is different according to ethnicity needs to be answered in further study.

Discourse on Psychological health (D2)

Psychological health is the second largest theme (25.5%, Table 1) in previous studies. It is a natural result in the sense that counseling itself deals with psychological health. Previous studies quantitatively measured the degree of psychological health of international students with the following indicators: self-efficacy, self-esteem, psychological well-being, depression, adult-attachment, and more. And then previous literatures focused on exploring the relationship between those psychological indicators and other (dependent or independent or meditating) variables.

Psychological health discourse is divided between positive discourse and negative discourse. First, the positive discourse is related to positive indicators like self-efficacy, self-esteem, psychological well-being, adult-attachment, personality strength, and more. This discourse says that as positive index increases, qulity of life is also improved. For example, self-efficacy (i.e., awareness of successful achievement) may enhance the searching activity for career and vocation of international students. Second, the negative discourse is related to negative indicators like dresression, loneliness, addiction, stress, and more. This discourse tends to overemphasize psychologically problematic phenomenon of international students. For example, stress is related to internet addiction (Hong, 2014).

In summary, psychological health discourse in Korea has been unfolded within the balace between developmental (i.e. positive) perspective and pathological (i.e. negative) perspective (Yoon & Portman, 2004, p. 38). It is certainly different from the US research tendency to overemphasize pathological aspects in international students (Pederson, 1991; Yoon & Portman, 2004). The ultimate purpose for counseling international students is to enhance their psychological health, specifically, to increase their positive psychological index. Thus, research tendency to stress psychological strengths of international students and not to overemphasize their psychological weaknesses is expected to be continued in the further studies.

However, although psychological health discourse suggests a variety of variables, including demographic, academic, and ethinic variables, it does not seem to deeply deal with what are the most crucial variables to influence psychological health. For this task, qualitative research method will be more necessary. Based on quantitative methods, previous studies can find overall tendency of variables from large-sized sample. However, the quantitative methodology did lack of in-depth exploration of each variable. However, qualitative method helps find in-depth exploration on each variable within small-size group or individuals. And then, further studies need to structuralize a relationship between variables to influence psychological health.

Discourse on Career and vocation (D3)

Career and vocation is the third largest theme (13.5%, in Table 1) in Korean researches. Recently, this theme has been in an increasing trend, as career-focused counseling researches accounted for 27% of total research production in 2016. It seems to reflect international students' considerable interest in future career preparation. Noticeably, it is the biggest difference between Korean researches and the US researches. Pendes and Inman (2017) shows that this category is the nineth among ten categories in the US. It seems to reflect different atmosphere between two nations.

Previous studies focused on the relationship bewteen career-related indicators and personal variables (psychological health, cultural adjustment, and more). For example, one's awareness of career barrier has a negative correlation with social support and adaptation to university life respectively, and it has a meditation effect between the social support and the adaptation to university life (Jin, 2017). Thus, career and vocation discourse have been unfolded, focusing on exploration of personal variable relation.

Career and vocation may be considered as one of the ultimate reasons why international students came to study in Korea. If this issue is not secured, their cultural adjustments and phychological health may falter. And career and vocation issue is practical and visible, while psychological health is foundational and invisible. Thus, if counselors can appropriately use career issue, their effort may be more accessible and immediately effective to international students.

However, personal career-related counseling without structural improvement on career-related environment may face fundamental limitation. In other words, counseling without understanding national and international job maket or imrproving friendlier environment for international students may be an armchair argument. In this sense, univeristy's institutional help for international student's future carrer may be more important than individual counselor or professor's help. Institutional change and environmental support can considerably influence an international student by the trickle-down effect (Yoon & Portman, 2004, p. 37; Sue et al, 1998). Thus, further study needs to deal with environmental factors with personal

factors. In other words, it needs to consider Korea and their country's overall environments for career. Additionally, career and vocation are universial issue to international students as well as Korean students. In this sense, further study need to compare and analyze difference between nationalities or ethnicities.

Picture 2 and Table 2 are the summary of main discourses and future research agendas on international students-focused counseling researches as follows:

Picture 2. Discourse Mapping
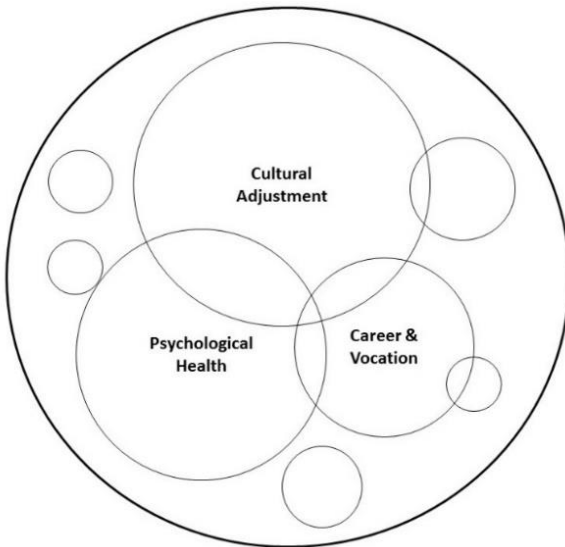
Table 2. Discourse Analysis & Future Research Agenda

Discourse	Future Research Agenda
D1: As descriptive and prescriptive indicator, cultural adjustment is the most important element in international student counseling	Universal versus Specific Characteristics - Diversification of research participants
D2: According to developmental or pathological perspective, psycholigical health can be measured positively or negatively	Exploration on the Most Crucial Variables - In-depth study by qualitative research - Structure between variables
D3: As a realistic interest of international students, career and vocation are related to other variables.	Environmental vesus Personal Factors - Comparison between nations

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