

Social-Phychological Implications of International Labor Migration: The Case of Korean Workers in the Middle East and Their Families*

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I. Introduction

It was 1974 when the very first batch of some three hundred Korean construction workers landed on the strange desert of Saudi Arabia and Iran. Ever since, more than half a million migrant workers from Korea have shed their sweat in the heat of the Middle East(Kim, S., 1981). As

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of 1981, it is estimated, over 150 thousand Koreans employed by 75 construction companies were dispatched to 13 different Middle East countries. Although this figure may comprise only a small fraction of the total labor force in Korea, it does take up more than ten percent of all the employed persons in the construction industry. Furthermore, the amount of construction orders from these Middle East countries surpassed the 40 billion US dollar mark for about eleven hundred contracts, as of 1981 (Yoo, 1982). And the direct contribution to GNP by the remittances from the migrant workers overseas reached 2.2 percent in 1980, from a low ratio of 0.6 percent in 1965. It should be noted, however, that these direct contribution measures no doubt greatly underestimate their actual contributions to the whole economy (Kim, S., 1981).

The economic importance of labor migration to the Middle East, as depicted briefly in the above account, may have been exaggerated both to the eyes of the people in Korea and those outside, including the Arabs. But it still is true that the economic consequences of international labor migration are generally viewed as being positive to the nation as a whole and to the individuals and families involved. Due to the overwhelming interest in the economics of the phenomenon, however, the human aspects have been unduly neglected both by practitioners and academicians. Unlike the economic side of the picture, there have emerged signs of rather serious gloomy as well as some obvious rosy implications, from the viewpoint of social-psychological impacts.

It is to this human side of the phenomenon of Korean labor migration to the Middle East that this preliminary study addresses itself. Dreams fulfilled and dreams yet to come true, high hopes and abysmal despair, endless perseverance and acute loneliness met by formidable temptations, and so goes the list of lights and darkneses in the life of individuals and families thousands of miles apart. We deal with these typically qualitative aspects of the subject matter in this study; thus, it employs basically a descriptive approach, summarizing qualitative data in quantitative form.

This strategy, of course, is primarily determined by the dearth of any systematically gathered and analyzed quantitative empirical data. It is also due to the general lack of theoretical guidelines for analyzing and interpreting such data.

In short, our objective, scope, and methods are quite limited because of the unfortunate state of the social scientific study of Korean labor migration to the Middle East. Despite the importance of, or perhaps we should say, because of the heavy weight accorded to, the policy of migratory labor contracts to the Middle East, official data sources have generally been closed to the academia and direct contacts with those individuals and families concerned have been discouraged. Attempts to conduct systematic empirical study have been constantly met with cool attitudes on the part of the authorities on account of security precautions. Only very recently, however, it has become apparent that we need to broaden the prospective labor export markets on the global scale, mainly due to the decline in the construction orders from the Middle East countries which have begun to feel the crunch caused by the stable petroleum price. Under the circumstances, to meet the uncertain future more wisely, the need for scientific assessment of the phenomenon has been gradually recognized and some select source materials are being slowly released for this purpose. Even though the bottleneck is not completely cleared, the situation looks much better than a couple years ago.

In the meantime, the level of interest among the general populace in the various impacts of temporary separation of workers from the family and of the regular remittance of rather flush income from overseas has been steadily rising. Thus, mass media have not been negligent at all in picking on the so-called "problem" temporary widows as well as "exemplary" housewives and success stories, all caused by the international migration of workers. Moreover, internal efforts have been exerted by the Ministry of Labor and the construction firms involved to collect and analyze various data not only on the economics of contracted labor but also on the social-

psychological aspects of the phenomenon. It is these sources that we have been able to tap for this preliminary study.

The situation does not seem a bit better on the theoretical side, either. A general review of the major literature on international migration still reveals shortage of systematized conceptual-theoretical frameworks to guide the description and explanation of the subject matter. The existing theoretical and empirical studies tend to concentrate on the motivations of international migration and adaptation processes and problems in the receiving societies (Lee, 1980). Return migration, internal or international, has been a generally neglected subject matter in the field of migration studies (Feindt and Browning, 1972). And even those on return migration have focused on motivations rather than consequences with very few exceptions (Lee, 1980; Toren, 1978; Unesco, 1982; Cerase, 1975). More recently, there have begun to appear works on Asian labor migration to the Middle East, but their interest has been largely in the manpower and employment patterns and procedures (Keely, 1980; Pitayanon, 1981; Birks and Sinclair, 1979; Socknat and Birks, 1981). We have been unable to locate material dealing specifically with the type of problem we tackle in this study, providing useful guidelines for theoretical approach. We shall, therefore, attempt to discuss our findings in terms of their theoretical implications, at least on our own.

The main question we pursue in the present study is: What are the most urgent concerns and difficulties experienced by the migrant workers and their families left behind? The answer to this question will be sought from simple descriptive analysis of material available in the following form: petitions to the Ministry of Labor counseling section for overseas workers and their families; case materials compiled at the counseling centers set up by a few select major construction companies for their overseas workers and their families; letters and diaries of, and interview reports with the spouses of the migrant workers, published in some special journals put out by the firms or the Overseas Construction Association; and some survey

findings collected by a large construction firm.

II. Findings

1. Select Demographic, Socioeconomic Characteristics

While no data are available on the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the whole population of migrant workers dispatched to the Middle East, we were fortunate enough at least to get hold of some confidential data of limited survey findings from X Construction Co. This is a study of 540 workers employed by the company for overseas jobs, conducted in October and November of 1981. As of 1981, there were 31,400 workers employed for overseas jobs by this firm. Table 1 contains the summary findings of this survey. These findings should give us some general picture of the nature of workers employed for overseas labor contract.

According to Table 1, almost all of the workers are married and most have a nuclear type family composed of 3 to 5 persons each. Somehow, unfortunately, no age data are compiled, but some indirect evidence on the family life-cycle can be used to estimate the average age range. About one half of those surveyed have children of elementary school age (6-12), slightly less than a third, children in pre-school or younger, and about one fifth, those of middle school age and above (13-22). Assuming that the average working-class adult male starts family in his late twenties, those in the age group between 34 and 39 comprise about a half of the migrant workers. Also, considering the fact that the proportion of those who are below 34 is a little bit larger than that of workers in their forties and older, the crude mean of the age must run somewhere near 35 years old. Of the 540 workers surveyed, however, only 29 percent own their home, while a majority live in rental homes. As will be shown presently below, home ownership happens to be one of the most important and urgently wanted values of these workers and their families.

Table 1. Summary of X Construction Co. Survey Findings (Oct.~Nov. 1981)

A. Demographic Features (N=540)	
Marital Status	(%)
Married	97.4
Single	2.6
Family Type	
Nuclear	80.4
Patrilocal	16.0
Matrilocal	3.6
Family Size	
2 persons	6.0
3 persons	26.0
4 persons	31.0
5 persons	22.0
6 persons	15.0
Mean	4.1 pers.
Family Life Cycle	
Pre-school children	27.4
Elementary school children	48.0
Middle school children	13.5
High school children	8.1
College children	3.0
Housing	
Rental	63.3
Own home	29.0
Relatives' home	7.7
B. Employment	
Overseas Employment	
Once	45.2
Twice	34.8
Three times +	20.0
Length of Overseas Work	
Up to 1 year	49.0
1 to 1 1/2 years	24.7
1 1/2 years +	26.3
Motives for Overseas Employment	
To own home	37.8
Better economic life	23.2

To pay debts	15.2
Education of children	13.9
Better quality of life	5.6
To help livelihood	4.3

C. Income & Expenditure

Average Monthly Wage for 31,400 workers on the payroll as of Nov. 1981 was ₩526,000.

Of this amount

₩300,000 paid direct to family,

₩155,000 retained in company savings.

The average is 2.6 times of mean monthly wage of urban workers in Korea (₩199,000).

Recipient of Remittance

Wife	91.5
Husband's parents	4.0
Other	4.1

81 families surveyed earn additional income by other family members, ₩130,000 on the average.

Average monthly expenditure of each family was ₩170,000, smaller than average urban worker's family expenditure (₩221,000).

Composition of Savings

Financial institutions	₩55,100
Private cooperative(Kay)	₩53,300
Total	₩108,400

Shortage of Fund Caused by

Over-saving in banks	34.3%
Over-saving in Kay	41.7%
Payment of debt	18.0%
Schooling expenses	3.0%
Daily living expenses	3.0%
(N=201 families)	

D. Social Aspects

Average No. of Letters Sent	(%)
Once a month	5.0
2~3 times	43.3
4~5 times	39.5
6 times +	12.2
Average No. of Letters Received	

Once a month	13.9
2~3 times	45.0
4~5 times	32.2
6 times +	8.9
Family Members' Consulting Agent	
Other members & relatives	71.3
Neighbors, colleagues	15.0
Counseling centers	12.0
Other overseas workers' families	1.7
Most Concerned Problems	
Health of worker	92.3
Correspondence	2.2
Conditions of country of contracted labor	0.6
No response	4.9

Over half of these workers have renewed their contract to work overseas at least one time with one fifth of them obtaining employment three or more times. About half have worked overseas for one year or longer. As for the motivation for overseas employment, home ownership is the most important reason. This is not surprising since only 29 percent of workers surveyed already own their home. Including the desire to own a home, the economic reasons are given by the large majority of the informants. Even the seemingly non-economic reasons such as education of children and better quality of life certainly implies economic betterment.

If the economic motivations are so strong, then is their income really that attractive? According to the general survey of all 31,400 overseas workers employed by this company, the average monthly wage amounts to 526,000 *Won* in 1981, which is approximately \$700.00 and about 2.6 times larger than the mean monthly wage of average urban workers in Korea (199,000 *Won* or around \$260.00). This is certainly a flush income, we must say. Now, of the 526,000 *Won*, 300,000 *Won* is paid directly to the family, 91.5 percent of the actual recipient being the spouse of the worker. Out of the remaining wage, 155,000 *Won* is deposited in the company savings program and the rest is used by the worker himself. There

were 81 families which were making an average of extra 130,000 *Won* a month by other members of the family left behind. For these special families, the total income adds up to quite a sizable amount of 656,000 *Won* (\$875.00) each month.

It is interesting to detect that while the monthly wage income is larger for the overseas workers than the domestic urban workers, their family expenditure is found to be smaller (170,000 *Won* a month) than that of the latter (221,000 *Won*). This means that sizable hunk, like 108,400 *Won* on the average is put up in savings. About one half of this amount is saved in the financial institutions like banks and trust companies, and the other half accumulated in the traditional form of private cooperative called *Kay*. This *Kay* is not only a form of financial cooperative but also plays significant social roles as a sort of fellowship organization. For instance, twelve individuals, usually friends and relatives, form this *Kay* in which each member puts up a certain amount of money every month for, say, twelve or sometimes twenty-four months, and each person in turn takes home the total sum collected. The size of payment is so determined that one has to pay larger sums after one's turn to use the cumulated sum than before. Each month when they make the payment, the members gather in one place, usually in a restaurant or a resort area, and enjoy the fellowship.

At any rate, returning to our survey families, 201 out of the 540 families studied complained that their income is less than sufficient not because the level of income in itself is too low but chiefly because they save too much out of the earnings. Over three quarters of these families reported shortage of fund due to savings either in the bank or in the *Kay* cooperative. It should be emphasized that the proportion of families reporting shortage of fund for living due to the *Kay* installment is larger than that of those complain over-saving in the financial institutions. In other words, the place of the so-called informal sector in the economy is revealed in part in this report.

When family members are separated by international labor contract for a period extending one year or longer, almost the only way of communicating between them would be written correspondence. Overseas phone calls are made, but on extremely urgent occasions only. The large majority of the families studied seem to be exchanging letters between two and five times per month. Family members left behind are writing a bit more often than the workers overseas, as can be readily expected. The former write about every week, whereas the latter, around twice a month.

The final portion of the X company survey findings has to do with the people from whom the families seek counseling and the most concerned problems. Other family members and relatives are the most frequently consulted, followed by neighbors and other colleagues in the work place. The number of people consulting with the professional counseling services, either of the Ministry of Labor or the company of employ, is relatively limited (12 percent). And the great majority of the people are concerned about the health of the worker away from home in the foreign soil.

The above presentation is, no doubt, limited in its substance and scope. But it is believed that this sort of data which are quite scarce in the first place does provide a broad picture of the characteristics of the individuals and families we are dealing with in this study. With this much of background information, we now will concentrate on the social-psychological implications of international labor migration.

2. Grievances and Issues Brought Up in Petitions and Counseling

During the seventies when overseas construction has become a booming business, most attention seems to have been directed to the plush income it has been bringing in to the nation as a whole and to the families. As time has passed, however, human stories of the darker side of the project have gradually surfaced. The problems primarily have had to do with the industrial relations issues on the spot in the Middle East, on the one hand, and the family matters at home, on the other. Exposure of these

troubles has been carefully guarded for various reasons. Mass media, however, have not been too quiet, especially in the more recent years, and begun to reveal stories of this nature off and on. Of course, media have also reported poignant success stories side by side the tragedies.

For instance, several issues of the *Chosun Ilbo* and the *Donga Ilbo* in March and April of 1983 have articles dealing with the following stories: a woman has succeeded in buying a home by saving up the money remitted from her husband working in the Middle East, while managing the livelihood of her family of 12 members through her own work as a milk lady; a woman whose husband is a worker in the Middle East and her lover committed suicide by taking poison right before her husband's expected return home; a woman was murdered by her lover of the affair she was fallen into while her husband was away in the Middle East; a woman has deserted the baby born of the extramarital affair committed during her husband's overseas employment; a woman has disappeared with her two sons after having squandered the remittances from her husband in the Middle East through an affair with another man; a man has applied for a divorce with his wife who has been unfaithful during his overseas employment; or a worker returned from the Middle East has committed suicide by poisoning himself after finding his wife run away with another man with the money obtained from selling the house they have bought with the remittances from his overseas employment. These being the newspaper stories, they tend to disclose rather extreme cases.

In order to have a more balanced picture, therefore, we have dug into the source material provided by various counseling organizations in the government and the construction companies. It is our duty to report here that these data have been released with utmost care and hesitance on the part of those in charge because the authorities wanted them to be kept confidential. Thus, the names of the companies are expressed in letters. Some of the material we obtained were in the form of simple descriptive accounts, while others were frequency tables compiled by the organizations

Table 2. Grievances Contained in Petitions to Ministry Guidance Center
(Jan.~June 1983)

Items	N	%
Economic Matters		
Compensations for industrial accidents, injuries	13	27.1
Compensations for shutdowns, etc.	7	14.6
Air fare reimbursement	6	12.5
Unpaid wages, pensions	4	8.3
Sub-total	(30)	(62.5)
Personnel Matters		
Problems related to contract	5	10.4
Overseas recruitment	3	6.2
Unfair treatment, layoff	3	6.2
Sub-total	(11)	(22.8)
Social Matters		
Runaway wife	1	2.1
Correspondence	1	2.1
Unidentified letter	1	2.0
Sub-total	(3)	(6.2)
Other	4	8.3
Total	48	99.8

themselves.

According to Table 2, which summarizes the types of grievances contained in the petitions submitted to the guidance center of the Ministry of Labor between January and June 1983, economic matters appear to be the most often mentioned items comprising over 60 percent, followed by personnel and employment matters (22.8%), and social and other problems.

This general picture contrasts with the one disclosed in the grievances and issues brought up at the company counseling centers, as shown below. While financial matters are still important even in the latter case, family affairs take up the largest proportion (Table 3). It is true even in the case of company counseling materials that a very large number of items discussed and treated have to do with routine matters of issuing certificates, consular affairs, or possibilities and procedures for application for extension of contracts, and the like. For instance, in the case of Company X cited

above for its survey, there were 23,030 workers employed for overseas jobs in 1982. But the number of cases enumerated for consultation reached 117,318 brought in by 509 persons in the same year. Of these over one hundred thousand cases, almost 70 percent were about these routine matters. Similar figures are found for Company A, too. Thus, we have left these cases out of consideration in this analysis.

The figures in Table 3 must be interpreted with caution because the classification scheme used by different firms is not identical and some categories cover too broad a range of problems. All we wanted to draw from these data is a general idea of the nature of difficulties encountered by the workers while away from home. Overall, family matters happen to be the most frequently cited concerns, closely followed by financial matters. Then, other personal matters and personnel or employment questions are discussed at the counseling centers. Of the family affairs, interrupted correspondence from the family worries the workers most. But deaths and illnesses in the family and the wife's infidelity also cause quite a bit of concerns for them. As for the financial matters, most workers would like to make sure that their hard earned wages are duly remitted to their family and are appropriately managed at home, or they are properly put up in the savings or insurance programs. On the other hand, the workers also express worries about the legal tangles at home relative to debts and real estate deals. About the employment matters, some workers seem to want to find out about the possibility of interrupting the contract in order to return home early or about the exact date of expected repatriation as the end of the current contract draws near.

There are of course some significant variations among the firms in the relative frequency with which different issues are brought before the counselor. It is also true that there are overlapping problems between different categories. For example, when a worker wishes to seek counseling about the possibility and procedure of interrupted return home, he usually is motivated to do so because of death or serious illness of family members,

Table 3. Grievances & Issues Consulted at Company Counseling Centers (%)

Issues	Construction Companies (months/year)					Total
	A		X	B	Y	
	9~12 1982	1~5 1983	1982	1~4 1983	1982	
N=	451	303	268	253	114	1,389
Family Affairs						
Deaths, illnesses	1.1	1.3	33.6 ^{a)}	3.2	14.0	8.9
Unfaithful, runaway wife	2.0	3.6	24.3	8.3	12.3	8.6
Interrupted correspondence	14.4	12.5	7.8	44.3	1.8	17.1
Children, in-laws, & other	4.6	—	1.5	—	—	1.8
Sub-total	(22.1)	(17.4)	(67.2)	(55.8)	(28.1)	(36.4)
Financial Matters						
Wages, remittances	23.5	—	4.9	28.1	23.7	15.6
Debts	4.2	6.9	5.2	—	7.0	4.5
Savings, insurances	14.4	—	—	8.3	—	6.2
Real estate problems	2.7	—	10.8	4.7	1.8	4.0
Sub-total	(44.8)	(6.9)	(20.9)	(41.1)	(32.5)	(30.3)
Employment Matters						
Interrupted return home	11.1	10.2	0.7	—	11.4	6.9
Expected date of return	18.4	—	—	—	—	6.0
Sub-total	(29.5)	(10.2)	(0.7)	—	(11.4)	(12.9)
Other Personal Matters	3.5	65.3	11.2	3.2	28.0	20.4
Total	99.9	99.8	100.0	100.1	100.0	100.0

Note : a) This category represents "desire to return home on account of death or illness in the family," in the original table.

runaway wife, or other financial problems. Thus, we have pursued one step further in this direction, since, fortunately, there were some data on the more specific reasons for interrupted repatriation, on the one hand, and on the causes of the spouse's unfaithfulness and other related material, on the other.

Table 4 contains information on the stated reasons for return home interrupting the current contract, obtained from those who have applied for such action between March and May of 1983 at Company Y. According to this table, broadly defined "family matters" take up more than a half of the reasons given by the applicants. There is one more category of family matters specifically referring to the wife's infidelity, but it is possible

Table 4. Reasons for Interrupted Return Home
(Y Const. Co. March~May 1983)

Reasons	N	%
Family matters	48	55.8
Health problems	7	8.1
Local maladjustment	6	7.0
Wife's infidelity	6	7.0
Real estate problems	5	5.8
Indebtedness	5	5.8
Wage grievances	4	4.6
Working conditions	4	4.6
Inadequate skill	1	1.2
Total	86	99.9

that many of those who have complained about the family matters must be also concerned about the spouse's delinquency. Assuming this, the proportion of family matters adds up to over sixty percent and the worries about the wife's behavior may be serious. Health and local maladjustment come next, followed by financial problems and employment matters, the pattern being similar to the case of the overall grievances summarized in Table 3 above.

Another set of data that we have obtained deals with the 65 cases of workers who have mentioned the problem of unfaithful or runaway wife at the counseling center of Company X. The counselors apparently have inquired of them about perceived causes or reasons for such unfaithful behavior on the part of their wives and also compiled some demographic data on those workers who have brought up this complaint. As shown in Table 5, many of them admitted that lengthy separation in itself due to their overseas employment must have played a significant part in causing their wives to go astray. But these forty percent have also mentioned other compounded causes in addition to the separation problem. The rest may be classified into a few distinct categories. For example, society is blamed for prevalence of the kind of distorted, unsound leisure activities and the undesirable general cultural atmosphere, into whose tempting hands

Table 5. Causes of Unfaithful, Runaway Wife's Behavior
(X Construction, 1982)

Cause	%
Lengthy separation plus other complications	40.0
Unfit marriage	13.8
Distorted leisure activities & family indifference	10.8
Flush remittances beyond needs, causing delinquent <i>Kay</i> meetings & gambling	9.2
Tempting general social-cultural atmosphere	6.2
Bad family origin & unruly disposition	6.2
Lack of will power & endurance	6.2
Unfaithful past even before overseas employment	4.6
Drinking & other bad habits	3.1
Total	100.1
N	65

their spouses must have fallen victims. Or marriage itself is looked upon as a failure from the beginning either because it was an unfit marriage anyway or because the wife used to have some past affair prior to marriage. The individual's dispositions, weak will power, or even family background are the target of blame for some workers. And the sudden increase of flush cash income is often cited as causing indulgence in delinquent *Kay* cooperative meetings and gambling behavior.

Then, who are these people with such painful complaints? Eight out of ten are below forty, but those in the age category of 36-40 happen to be the majority (40%), and the percentage drops as the age declines. The proportion of workers with this grievance increases with the length of overseas employment, as can be expected. And one half of them are construction workers, while more skilled heavy machinery operators or civil engineering technicians occupy about 20 percent each.

The data we have presented thus far are mostly drawn directly from the already compiled tables provided by the counseling organizations concerned. Because of this, they are either too crude for certain analytic purposes or they are not entirely consistent with each other in some sense.

Table 6. Demographic Characteristics of Those Who Sought Counseling
on Family (Wife) Problems
(X Construction, 1982)

Characteristics	%
Age	
25 ~ 30	13.8
31 ~ 35	26.2
36 ~ 40	40.0
41 +	20.0
Total	100.0
Length of Overseas Employment	
~ 3 months	13.8
4 ~ 6 months	13.8
7 ~ 9 months	26.2
10 ~ 12 months	16.9
1 ~ 2 years	26.2
2 years +	3.1
Total	100.0
Skill Type	
Heavy machinery	20.0
Civil engineering	21.5
Construction	50.8
Cooking	3.1
General	4.6
Total	100.0
N =	65

Nevertheless, we believe they are rather valuable materials helping us gain some insight into the difficulties and agonies the migrant workers go through in their hard working life in a foreign country.

3. Hopes and Hardships Experienced by the Families

While the above data tell us something about the grievances and problems experienced by the workers, we have also gathered on our own some materials in which hopes and hardships, dreams and despairs felt by the family members, particularly the spouses of the workers, left behind may be revealed. The raw data we used for this purpose are contributed

Table 7. Content Analysis of Articles, Letters, Diaries, & Interview Reports of Overseas Workers' Wives Published in Journals

Themes	Overseas Constr. Assn. (1981, 82, 83)		Dong-A Constr. Co. (1982, 83)		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Emphasizing saving, frugal living	25	44.6	10	15.6	35	29.2
Concerns for child rearing, education, health	19	33.9	18	28.1	37	30.8
Stressing hopes for own home	13	23.2	9	14.1	22	18.3
Wife helping family expenses by work, employment outside home	13	23.2	9	14.1	22	18.3
Success story of buying own home	8	14.3	2	3.1	10	8.3
Reassuring value of, & longing for spouse, complete home	7	12.5	16	25.0	23	19.2
Enduring with dream of starting own business	6	10.7	—	—	6	5.0
Hopes for redemption of debts	5	8.9	—	—	5	4.2
Hoping stable work career of husband	4	7.1	—	—	4	3.3
Move from monthly rental to long-term rental home	2	3.6	—	—	2	1.7
Dreams for rural life	2	3.6	—	—	2	1.7
Difficulties of living with in-laws	1	1.8	6	9.4	7	5.8
* All Items Analyzed	56		64		120	

* These numbers are the basis of percentage calculation; more than one theme may appear in one item, thus percentages do not add up to 100.

articles, letters, diaries, and interview reports of the wives, published in two periodicals, one put out by the Overseas Construction Association and the other by *Dong-A* Construction Company. The former is called *Milmul* (the Surf) and the latter, the *Dong-A*, the official company organ.

Using each item as the unit of analysis and counting the major theme(s) represented in each, we have made simple content analysis of these documents. The descriptive findings appear in Table 7. Note that each item of article, letter, and the like may be counted more than once depending on the number of major themes expressed in each.

Although some variations are detected between the two sources, the stories told in these documents cover two major categories of the economic and social aspects of hopes and hardships experienced by the spouses

and other family members. Frugal life the whole family must endure for saving and the extra work the woman has to engage in to own a home, to repay the family debts, to make move step by step from the monthly rental to a long-term rental house, for the dreams of owning a home, of starting a long planned business or rural life, and so on are most often emphasized. All these have to do with dreams of better life in economic terms and the hardships entailed in pursuing them. As for the social matters, children happen to be the most important theme repeatedly appearing in almost a third of the stories, with respect to child rearing without father, schooling matters, and health problems. About two out of ten also express very poignant emotions about the loneliness of separation by which experience, they confess, they gain realization of the value of the complete home and the spouse. Though few in number, some women have mentioned difficulties involving in-laws.

Here again, the picture presented in quantitative form may not tell the whole stories of extremely qualitative nature. The sufferings entailed in leading a very thrifty life, some working long hours outside the home for extra earnings, the acute sense of longing for the man in the home in the countless nights of emptiness, the occasional expression of disappointment by the children when they find themselves wanting the father around, are intermixed with the fervent dreams and hopes of making it in the ladder of socioeconomic mobility so badly sought after. Even the writing is so emotionally charged that one cannot help but easily moved by reading some of these source materials. What we have intended in this work, therefore, is merely to present some preliminary picture of the life of these worker's families, on the basis of whatever available data. We could have touched upon the manner in which and the degree to which these emotions are expressed in our content analysis. But this, we thought, was beyond our current scope of study. Future analysis may benefit greatly from these other attempts, as well.

III. Discussion

The present study has touched upon a very limited scope of data regarding the social-psychological implications of international labor migration, focusing on the Korean construction workers employed for overseas jobs in the Middle East. The source materials used for analysis or presentation are primarily those provided by the major construction firms employing these migrant workers, plus some from the government agency concerned. Two main types of data have been presented: case materials compiled by the government and company counseling centers, dealing primarily with the grievances and problems brought up by the workers in the Middle East, on the one hand; and personal documents such as letters, diaries, and the like published by the workers' spouses in a couple of periodicals put out by the Overseas Construction Association and one particular construction firm, on the other.

Descriptive analysis of these data has revealed that family affairs and financial matters are the two most often discussed concerns on the part of both the workers themselves and their spouses at home. Not all of these matters are entirely of negative nature. In fact, some stories told in the personal documents are those of triumphs and bright future. But since our focus has been on the concerned matters, the dark side has been more starkly cast. Also, the family and economic matters are often overlapping. For instance, the worries about whether his wages have been duly remitted to his family are closely connected with the ability of his family and spouse to make the best use of them for savings, livelihood, and education of children, etc. They are also related to the possible breakdown of the family by the failure on the part of the spouse to well manage the income or the wife's deviant behavior.

In fact, our primary interest was in the social-psychological impact of rather lengthy separation owing to international labor migration upon the

family life, especially on the conjugal relationship. Even if numerically the cases of family breakdown caused by the wife's deviance are not too prevalent relative to other grievances, the degree of seriousness seems to be outstanding, as demonstrated in the scanty newspaper stories cited earlier in this paper. Of course, the possible impact on the children should not be underestimated, but the kind of data we have been able to get hold of do not seem to reveal such impacts as clearly as the case of the conjugal troubles.

In order to have a fuller understanding of this particular issue, however, we might have to start from the motivation factor involved in the decision to take the sort of job we are examining. Because international labor migration by nature requires a long period of family separation and the persons in question must be aware of this fact, we should be able to locate the stronger motivating force behind such a drastic decision. According to our limited data and to our commonsense understanding, the economic reason seems to be the most significant motivating force for the move. Now, this very urgent motivation of economic betterment appears to play a double-edged role in consequence, with regard to its impact on the family. On the one hand, one might say on the positive side, it even further strengthens the family tie in the direction of pushing every single member of the family, especially the woman or the housewife, not only to endure the lonely daily life but to overcome the hardship of extra frugal living, often involving employment by the woman herself.

On the other hand, however, the result may be disastrous. Because of the separation, because of the sudden increment of regular income, and because of the extra hours of leisurely time, the woman may easily yield to the temptations from the outside. Even the ones who would participate in private cooperatives like *Kay* with the very good intention of enlarging the extra income may fall a prey to divergences often accompanying such activities. Once their foot in the mud, it becomes harder and harder to loosen the grip of temptations.

Between motives and the consequent actions, of course, there are "intervening" variables. It is in this gray area to which future research may have to pay much attention. We are not in a position even to make any preliminary statement on this issue, at least on the basis of the data we have mustered up so far. We only would like to point out the theoretical as well as policy import and implications of these "intervening" variables. Theoretically, we need to provide reasonable explanation for the apparently extremely opposite consequence of the seemingly identical motivation involved in the kind of international labor migration under examination. Policywise, too, it would be very useful to have systematic information on why some people go astray while others remain tight, and on how to help those who end up in disaster.

For instance, let us raise some pertinent questions. Is it the mere separation that causes all these problems? Apparently not. Then, as suggested in the data on the perceived causes or reasons for breakdown, is it personality dispositions? Probably, they have something to do with them, but to what extent and how? What about value orientations, family relationships and structure, socioeconomic background and demographic characteristics, or even social relationships? Or do the general social cultural orientations or atmospheres really have any significant imprint on the problems? If these variables are relevant, how are they in operation through what sort of dynamic mechanisms? Perhaps, these are some of the research questions we might want to pursue in dealing with this matter. Unfortunately, the field seems to be short of systematic theoretical and conceptual schemes to help us find the appropriate answers to these questions. It is our hope that future research in this area come up with some reasonable guidelines.

Needless to say, future research will also have to refine the conceptual framework and classificatory scheme to analyze the kind of data we have employed in this study. If some support is available, it would be very useful to conduct some surveys and case studies of these workers and their

families with our own research instruments in which the current shortcomings can be corrected. Even though the focus of our analysis has been on the social-psychological impacts, other socioeconomic and demographic variables will have to be included in this type of survey so that we may have a more wholesome picture of the life of these people.

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