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Master's Thesis of Arts

**Refugees` Experiences in Elementary
School and Needs for Improvement**
- the case of a refugee community in Itaewon, Seoul -

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Abstract

Over the last decade, the number of refugees has been increasing; half of them are children under 18. In addition, refugees' exile has been protracted from 10 to 25 years on average, and thereby to better protect their rights, integration of refugees into asylum countries has been widely argued. As a part of the actions, UNHCR developed a strategy to integrate refugee children into hosting countries' public education systems to promote refugees' access to quality education. Korea is also increasingly exposed to the global refugee crisis as a growing number of forcibly displaced people seek asylum in Korea, and the two recent incidents - the entrance of the Yemeni refugee group and the evacuation operation for Afghanistan - brought about public attention and discussion about refugees. As the seriousness of the refugee issue in Korea increases, refugee protection issues also become important.

In Korea, every refugee child can attend Korean school regardless of their legal status, which means refugees' access to education is ensured. However, the educational experiences of refugees who attend Korean schools are barely investigated, so there is a significantly limited understanding of what challenges refugee students come across in school, how their needs are satisfied and how schooling affects the refugees' understanding of themselves and the society. Providing supportive and inclusive education is impossible without understanding the subjective experiences of refugees and their point of view about Korean education. In this regard, it is required to make space where refugees can speak about their experiences so that they can contribute to transforming education and school into where they feel safe and included with the hope of finding a better future.

Based on this awareness of the problem, this research set two research questions:

1) What challenges and opportunities do refugees experience in Korean schools? 2) what do refugees recommend for making education better for refugees? To answer the research questions, a case study is conducted with refugee children attending MJ elementary school in Itaewon, Seoul, and their parents.

As a result of the study, four themes are analyzed for refugee parents: inclusion and exclusion, language learning, academic achievement for a better future, and cultural differences. As for refugee children, three themes are found: inclusion and exclusion, academic achievement, and identity. It is disclosed that refugees have supportive relationships in school but also experience discrimination. In particular, refugee parents experienced severe violence and exclusion in their home countries, so they expect Korean schools to teach peaceful co-existence with others. In addition, adaptation to a new culture is hard for refugee parents and children, and native and other foreign languages cannot be learned in school. Supports to keep their own culture and language need to be more developed so that refugees children can share their different identities in a more inclusive school environment. Last, refugees want good academic performance, and schools help them in many ways, like supplementary Korean and mathematics classes. However, they need more intervention and support from teachers and schools. The extension of academic help needs to be reviewed.

Keywords: refugee education, elementary school, multicultural education policy, inclusion

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

1.1.1 Global discussion about the integration of refugees

The number of refugees reached a record 27.1 million in 2021, and the ever-increasing number of refugees over the last decade has developed a sense of crisis worldwide (UNHCR, 2022). Furthermore, their exile has been protracted from 10 to 25 years on average, asking for durable solutions at the global level (Devictor & Do 2016; Milner & Loescher, 2011), and one discussed resolution is the integration of refugees into the hosting society against the separation from the community. It is based on the idea that refugees cannot live a precarious life indefinitely in confined camps with aid from humanitarian organizations, but they need to settle down and achieve self-reliance (UNHCR, 2011, 2014). However, as a multitude of refugees pours over the border, neighboring countries of refugees' countries of origin, who themselves mostly have a weak economy, vulnerable infrastructure, and sometimes even military crises, host most of the refugees - 72% of the total - by overstretching already poor resources (UNHCR, 2022). So in order to ease hosting countries' pressures, share the responsibility for refugee protection, and enhance the self-reliance of refugees, member states of the United Nations General Assembly developed the New York Declaration in 2016 and reaffirmed the commitment in the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018 (Dowd & McAdam, 2017; United Nations, 2018).

Education is crucial for protecting refugees and securing their livelihood in the hosting country. That is because school can be where refugees feel safe, build social

connections with hosting community members, increase a sense of belonging in the new society, and dream of success in the future (ECRE, 1999; Dryden-Peterson, 2011a, 2011b; Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2020). Basically, refugees' access to education and other educational issues that can happen in migration are discussed in the 1951 Refugee Convention, where states assure humanitarian support for refugees, as well as in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which governs diverse aspects pertaining to a child including educational opportunity. However, 50 percent of out-of-school children originate from conflict-affected countries (Shah & Cardozo, 2015). In this respect, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) developed a new education strategy, and its primary goal is to facilitate the inclusion of refugee children in the national education system of hosting countries for the opportunity to receive quality education (UNHCR, 2012; Dryden-Peterson, 2011b).

1.1.2. Emerging refugee issue in Korea

At the global level, the refugee issue has gained ascendancy, but in the Korean context, it has not been much dealt with in political, social, and academic realms, except between governmental entities and civil society organizations working for refugees (Lee, 2018). However, two incidents have recently drawn public attention to Korea's global and domestic refugee problem. The first incident was the arrival of a group of Yemeni asylum seekers in Jesu Island in 2018. Overnight, 527 Yemeni asylum seekers who left Malaysia arrived on Jeju Island to find a safe and sustainable place to stay and live. The unprecedented entrance of a group of asylum seekers into Korea gave a shock to Korean people. This incident eventually brought heated political and social discourses about refugees in Korean society. Notably, across the country, anti-refugee protests were caused, and people who joined the protests

revealed security-related anxiety about the possibility of a crime increase and argued the unfairness related to welfare benefits that refugees would receive but not pay taxes for (Yang, 2019). Being publicly raised by the securitization actors who consider refugees a potential threat to the security of Korea, the refugee issue gets widely politicized first in Korea (Lee, 2018).

Another issue that captured the eyes of the Korean public was the evacuation of Afghanistan refugees by the Korean government in 2021. When the US military force withdrew from Afghanistan, and the Taliban regime returned, the Korean government evacuated 391 Afghanistan people who had cooperated with the Korean government from the highly likely persecution from the new regime and officially supported them for their settlement and adaptation in Korea. Among them, the highest number of people, around 40 percent of the total evacuees, settled down in Ulsan, and it is reported that there are worries and resistance from the local community about the Islamic culture of Afghanistan refugees, centering around schools which 85 Afghanistan children attend (Yi, 2022). Because of the two incidents, Koreans began to perceive the refugee issue as one domestic problem, and multi-faceted discourses and researches relevant to refugees are facilitated (Kwon et al., 2021).

However, forcible displacement was not the irrelevant story of others but the substantially demanding present to Korean people in modern Korean history (Kim et al., 2010). Before 1945, the Korean peninsula had been colonized by Imperial Japan. At that time, many civilians moved to Jiandao to seek security, and independence activists sought asylum in countries like China and the USA. After independence, most Koreans went through severe poverty, so they received humanitarian aid from other countries and humanitarian organizations. To make matters worse, the Korean War broke out shortly after independence, putting many

people in refugee status. After the ceasefire between North Korea and South Korea, democratic movements under the military regimes generated political refugees who fled from fear of persecution. In spite of this suffering in contemporary history, South Korea eventually started to share the responsibility for refugee protection by achieving economic, political, and civil development. As a part of its actions, the South Korean government ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol in 1992. In 2013, it first legislated the domestic Refugee Act in Asia, which was considered an advanced humanitarian action and localization of international regimes (Choi, 2020). Now, affairs relevant to refugees are regulated under the Korean Refugee Act, and the Refugee Division in the Ministry of Justice has a general remit.

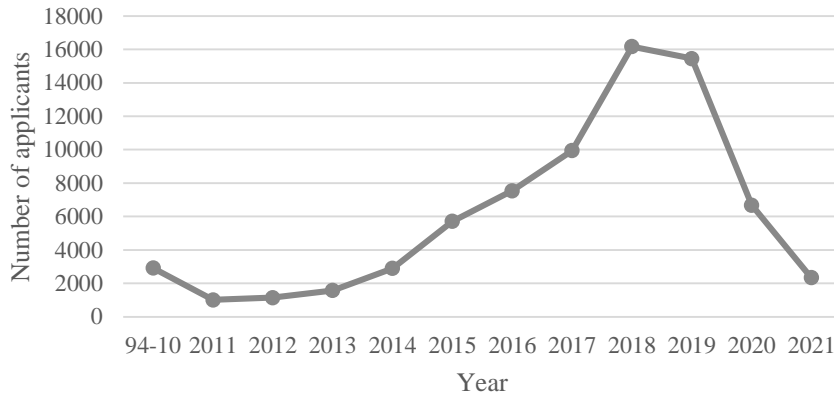
According to the yearly immigration statistics of the Ministry of Justice (2022a), from 1994, when the Korean government officially started to receive refugees, to 2021, 73,383 asylum seekers have applied for refugee status in Korea. Its number has continuously increased, setting aside the Covid-19 effects for the last two years (Figure 1). Among them, around 76 percent are male and 24 percent female. Moreover, the top five countries of origin of refugee applicants are China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Pakistan, and Egypt. Children refugee applicants under 18 years old are 2,939, accounting for 4 percent of the total population. Male children are 54 percent, and females are 46 percent.

As of 2021, among the total refugee status applicants, 1,163 people receive recognized refugee status with approximately two percent refugee recognition rate¹ , and 2,412 people are allowed to stay in Korea with the humanitarian sojourners

¹ the number of recognized refugees / number of refugee applicants whose recognition process is terminated.

Figure 1

The number of refugee applicants in Korea by year



Source: Ministry of Justice. (2022a). *Yearbook of Korea Immigration Statistics 2021*.

status, reaching up to around eight percent refugee protection rate². Regarding gender ratio, 59 percent of recognized refugees are male, and 41 percent are female. Seventy-seven percent of humanitarian sojourners are male, and 23 percent are female. The top five countries of recognized refugees' origin are Myanmar, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt, and humanitarian sojourners are from Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, China, and Pakistan. In addition, children with recognized refugee status are 402, accounting for 35 percent of the recognized refugees. Children with humanitarian sojourners status are 497, representing 21 percent of the total humanitarian sojourner population. The two groups have the same gender ratio: approximately 52 percent male and 48 percent female.

² the number of recognized refugees and humanitarian sojourners / number of refugee applicants whose recognition process is terminated.

1.1.3. Legal status of refugees and entitlement in Korea

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is anyone who is forcibly displaced from their home countries “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951), and the Korean Refugee Act (2016) adopts the same definition. Four legal statuses are defined in the law, and refugees can have differentiated legal entitlement following their legal status. Those statuses are recognized refugees, humanitarian sojourners, refugee applicants, and refugees desiring resettlement.

Recognized refugees are asylum seekers who meet the legal requirement of refugees, so the Korean government ensures relevant protection in accordance with the 1951 Refugee Convention. They are legally entitled to stay in Korea, find a job, have the freedom to travel abroad, as well as receive social security or basic living security at the same level as Korean citizens. Humanitarian sojourners are not legally accepted as refugees but are allowed to stay in Korea, considering serious humanitarian protection reasons. They are only allowed to have a residence permit within a year and have to renew it whenever it is over. While they stay, they are approved to seek a non-professional job with permission from the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Refugee status applicants are all asylum seekers who apply for the legal refugee recognition process in Korea and whose investigation has not yet been terminated. Their residential visa only lasts six months and can be extended until the screening process is over (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Refugee applicants can be subsidized with the living costs for the first six months, and they can obtain a job in Korea after that period. Lastly, refugees desiring resettlement are displaced people who seek refuge in other countries but wish to move to Korea

(Refugee Act, 2016).

Some people fail to have any status in the law but still stay in Korea. As a result, the status of their children also becomes fragile. To protect their children's right to education, the Ministry of Justice (2022b) developed a protective policy; the ministry decided to grant D-4 visas for children until graduation from high school in Korea and G-1 visas for their parents.

Furthermore, in the refugee context, the issue of stateless people is importantly discussed (UNHCR, 2011). A stateless person is someone "who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law" (Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless persons, 1954). According to UNHCR (2011):

Statelessness may arise as a result of conflict of laws ... when children are born abroad and unable to acquire either the nationality of the State where they are born or the parents' nationality. This is because, depending on the State, citizenship may be passed on either through the parents (by *jus sanguinis*), or by birth in the territory of the State (the principle of *jus soli*). (p.22)

During the journey of migration or after temporary or fixed settlement in hosting countries, some children whose parents are refugees have trouble gaining nationality for such a reason. Korea adopts the *jus sanguinis* principle for acquiring Korean nationality, so children whose refugee parents are foreigners cannot have Korean nationality. On top of it, it is hard for refugee parents to go to their national embassy because of fear of harm or for them to apply for birth registration or obtain nationality for their child due to administrative barriers (Kim et al., 2013). Therefore, some children of refugee parents remain unregistered in Korea, experiencing foundational exclusion without appropriate protection of their rights.

1.1.4 Protection of right to education

Nevertheless, refugees' access to compulsory Korean education is guaranteed by law. The Korean Refugee Act (2016) reads that recognized refugee, refugee applicant, and minor children of those two groups "shall receive the same elementary and secondary education as the Korean people." Also, the revision of the Enforcement Decree of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2008 and 2010 ensures children's admission to elementary and secondary school even by verifying the fact of residence in Korea, and it opens the possibility for refugees to access primary education regardless of their legal status (Kim et al., 2020). On the other hand, high school is not included in compulsory education, so principals of schools decide the entrance of refugees at their discretion according to the same act, the Enforcement Decree of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Kim et al., 2020). University entrance is only allowed to recognized refugees and humanitarian sojourners. So if other refugees without those two legal statuses want to go to university, they have to come back to their home country and re-enter Korea with a student visa, which is nearly impossible for refugees who fled from their home countries due to the significant violence (Kim et al., 2020).

Regarding financial expenses, compulsory education - elementary and middle school - is free, and according to the new Korean education welfare policy 'Free High School Education for All' introduced in 2019, high school admission fees and tuition will no longer be required (Kim et al., 2020). Moreover, most municipal education offices have adopted the free school meal policy, so less burden on refugees is expected (Kim et al., 2020). The Korean government supports educational expenses with two programs: education benefits and education expense supports. The education benefits program is included in the primary living security

system, so it can be provided to recognized refugees by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2021). It financially supports elementary, middle, and high school students with a certain amount of money. Education expense supports is another financial support program implemented by Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education. This program provides financial help for admission fees, tuition, school management supporting fees, textbook fees, school meal fees, after-school class fees, and the usage of ICT for education (Ministry of Education, 2021a). However, it is conferred on refugees differently based on their legal status. Educational expenses can be given to recognized refugees if the Minister of Justice allows it, and the other refugees are able to receive them when the recommendation from a school principal is accepted (Kim et al., 2020).

There is no education policy only for refugee children in Korea. Instead, refugees are dealt with as one of the migrant-background groups in the multicultural education policy (Ministry of Education, 2021b). Ministry of Education has announced a multicultural education support plan every year since 2006, and the vision of multicultural education is to make ‘students who are learning and growing together, and schools which are diverse and harmonious’ (Ministry of Education, 2021b). To fulfill this vision, several tasks are planned, such as securing the educational opportunity for migrant-background students, support for their school adjustment and stable growth, forging a school environment allowing the coexistence of diversity, and pursuing the substantiality of multicultural education supporting system (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

1.2. The Statement of Problem

As discussed above, a relatively small number of refugees could not attract

much public attention in Korean society. However, Korea increasingly exposes to the global refugee crisis as a growing number of forcibly displaced people come and seek asylum in Korea. The two recent noteworthy incidents – the arrival of a group of Yemeni refugees and the settlement of Afghanistan evacuees – make the whole Korean community recognize the existence of refugees in Korea and be curious about protecting refugees. This changing social environment encourages the Korean community to cast some critical questions regarding the refugee issue: how have we responded to refugees taking asylum in Korea, and is there any way we can rethink refugee protection?

Nation states develop their education policy for refugees according to how they envision refugees' lives in their country (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). The Korean government guarantees refugees access to compulsory education by law regardless of their legal status, so they enjoy equal education opportunities as Korean nationals. Also, a multicultural education policy manages refugee education, and the government supports refugees in their adjustment to Korean schools and society, as well as making Korea a welcoming, friendly, inclusive, and safe place for migrant students.

However, multicultural education policy primarily targets children in marriage-migrant families and foreign workers' families. They have gotten more attention in Korea due to the relatively larger number than refugees, and their integration into Korean society has been more discussed (Kim et al., 2020). On the other hand, political and social interests in looking into refugees' education were not stimulated as much as children's in marriage-migrant and foreign worker families, so virtual school life and the educational experiences of refugees are barely investigated in Korea. Hence, there are significantly limited understandings of refugees in educational settings, like what actual challenges refugee students come across in

school, how they deal with such difficulties, what desires and expectations they have about school, and whether such wishes are achieved or not (Kim et al., 2020). As a result, the needs of refugees are not considered adequately in education policy, and blind policy is being implemented for refugees without enough discussion about the educational vision for refugee students.

In this regard, it is required to make space where refugees can speak about their school experiences and what they want from Korean schools. Through this chance, they can contribute to making Korean education and school where they feel safe and integrated with the hope of finding a better future, and education policy can reflect the reality of refugees, too (Dryden-Peterson, 2011a).

1.3. Research Questions

With the research purpose to investigate and include the educational needs of refugees in the Korean education policy, research questions are made like below.

- 1) What are the challenges and opportunities that refugees experience in Korean schools?
- 2) What do refugees recommend for making education better for refugees?

To answer the research questions, a case study is conducted with a refugee community, and more detailed explanations about the methodology will be provided in the later section. In the meantime, literature that studies refugee education policy and refugees' school experiences will be covered in the next section.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this literature review part, to understand the Korean refugee education policy, multicultural education policy will be first reviewed. After that, under the policy, how refugees experience Korean educational institutions will be investigated with a small volume of existent studies.

2.1 Refugee Education Policy of Korea

In the Korean education system, children of migrant-background and foreigner families are mostly dealt with in the domain of multicultural education policy (Table 1). A refugee is defined as a type of foreign family group where neither of the parents is Korean, so the general multicultural education policy is applied for refugee children as well, not being separately managed from other foreign children (Ministry of Education, 2021b). In this respect, multicultural education will be discussed in this chapter as a policy of handling refugees' education in Korea, and its development, involved frameworks for a multicultural society, and practices of the policy will be covered to see what the policy can or cannot depict for the present and the future of refugees.

Before reviewing the literature about the development of Korean multicultural education policy, to increase the understanding of the discourses about multicultural education, theoretical frameworks for multiculturalism will be briefly explained here. Theoretical frameworks envisioning a multicultural society can be divided into three different approaches: conservative (assimilation) multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, and critical multiculturalism (Jenks et al., 2001; Kwak et al.,

Table 1

Types of multicultural students

Marriage-immigrant family	A child who was born in Korea A child who was born and grew up overseas before immigrating to Korea
Foreign family	★ Child in a foreign family (ex. Korean-Chinese, Syrian refugees)

Source: Ministry of Education. (2021c). 2021 Multicultural education supporting plan for equality in starting point.

2016). The conservative multiculturalism approach tries to impose mainstream culture on other members having minority cultural backgrounds in society. They expect to educate mainstream cultural values and norms to migrant-background students so that they unconsciously absorb the new culture and think and exercise like a member of mainstream culture. In this approach, discourses about equal educational opportunity, inclusion, and success often appear (Kozol, 1991, as cited in Jenks et al., 2011). The second framework is liberal multiculturalism, which aims to promote diversity and tolerance by celebrating cultural pluralism and different identities. In the education of liberal multicultural approach, sharing different cultures and mutual respect of culturally different students are facilitated to students by exchanging progressive, democratic, and inclusive goals together (Grant & Sleeter, 1997, as cited in Jenks et al., 2011). However, in the liberal multicultural approach, while power relations between cultures are overlooked and dismissed, inequality and repression of the cultures standing in the lower position of a power structure get stronger and worse. The framework disclosing and focusing on this hidden power relation among different cultures is critical multiculturalism. Critical multiculturalism asserts that to better equally distribute power and resources to marginalized groups, intended interruption is demanded, and education should

increase students' critical consciousness and transformative view and practices. With such different ideas about multicultural society, education policy is also written up, showing what educational purpose a country has for its national students and migration-background members, including refugees in the Korean context.

Multicultural education policy was first developed in 2006 in Korea when Participatory Government declared a transition into a multicultural society, and multicultural students' academic underachievement, psychological difficulties, or maladjustment to school started to be reported. Therefore, when the policy was invented, the policy approach was more inclined to make multicultural students adapt to Korean society by learning the Korean language and culture, which indicates a more assimilation-oriented understanding of multiculturalism. But at the same time, multicultural awareness of Korean nationals and tolerance toward differences of multicultural students and families were asserted in the policy. Therefore, assimilation-oriented multiculturalism and liberal multiculturalism were mixed into the multicultural education policy.

From this understanding, Kim (2017) analyses the development of Korean multicultural education policy in light of the tension between the two multiculturalism theoretical frameworks and suggests critical multiculturalism to complement the current drawbacks of the policy. He divides multicultural education developmental phases into two: 1) from 2006 to 2010 and 2) after 2011. He finds that in the first development period, assimilation and liberal multiculturalism frameworks were mixed; students with migration backgrounds were fundamentally deemed beneficiaries of governmental help from an assimilation-oriented perspective, and the support for them was related to how to help them adapt to Korean society better. On the contrary, education against discrimination and multicultural awareness programs for teachers, parents, and Korean students were

conducted, indicating the change to a liberal multicultural basis. After 2011, the Ministry of Education declares a transition into a liberal multiculturalism approach in policymaking and practices of multicultural education after receiving criticisms of the assimilation approach, but Kim (2017) finds the implementation of it still deficient. The Global Bridge Project, which aimed to increase multicultural students' understanding of their parents' countries of origin and leadership in the global context, was introduced in 2011, and bilingual education, mentoring with university students, multicultural awareness of the Korean public, and increased pre-service and in-service training of teachers were included in the policy. However, to attain the justification for carrying out multicultural education, multicultural students have been labeled as having problems in schools, and diverse backgrounds of multicultural students are not counted enough in the policy. For this reason, Kim (2017) argues that differentiated support based on the income level of multicultural families is required for the effectiveness of the policy, and multicultural education for the general public, Korean students, and teachers needs to be more developed for 'multicultural education for all.'

On the other hand, Kim & So (2018) investigate the nature of Korean multicultural education by analyzing the targets, objectives, and contents of the multicultural education policies developed from 2006 to 2016. They made three time divisions based on the policy initiatives of different Presidential administrations. As for multicultural education targets, students with different cultural backgrounds and Korean national students are identified in all three administrations, except for the first policy made in 2006 with only multicultural students designated. The objectives of multicultural education vary from supporting the adaptation of migrant students, establishing multicultural identities, and extending equality in educational opportunities to developing the multicultural capacities of Korean nationals.

Moreover, the contents of multicultural education are designed to accomplish the objectives of the policy, such as learning the Korean language and culture, understanding the language and culture of the county of origin, improvement of basic academic skills of multicultural students, programs for searching aptitude as well as a future career, and multicultural awareness program for Korean students. More details of objectives and contents drawn up in multicultural education policy are shown in Table 2 and 3 each. As a result, Kim & So (2018) analyze that Korean multicultural education is transferring from conservative to liberal or critical multiculturalism. However, cultural diversity and power relations among multiple cultures are not reflected enough in the policy, which calls for more liberal and critical multiculturalism frameworks in the policy-making process.

Another research which analyses and organizes the development of Korean multicultural education policy is the one conducted by Yang et al. (2017). They divide the ten-year multicultural education history into three developmental stages and keep track of the changes in multicultural education projects carried out by the Ministry of Education. Besides, Choi (2018) uses the same developmental stage designed by Yang et al. (2017) and enlightens the trajectory of changes in multicultural education in Korea. In the beginning stage (2006-2007), substantial changes were made, such as the deletion of curriculum contents involving mono-ethnicity in Korea, the first introduction of multicultural education into the national curriculum, and the establishment of the Central Multicultural Education Center for policy research and supports. At the introductory stage (2008-2011), multicultural preparatory schools which help migrant students learn the Korean language and culture before and after admission and transfer to Korean schools as well as multicultural education-oriented schools which implement both multicultural

Table 2*Objectives of multicultural education of Korea*

Period	Objectives	Sub-objectives
Participatory Government (2006-2007)	Adaptation as main members of Korean society	- Establishment of identity as Koreans - Educational supports
	Inclusion for new members	- Improvement of multicultural awareness and attitude - To overcome stereotypes about multiple cultures - Protection of human rights of diverse social members
Lee Myung-bak Government (2008-2012)	Supports for early adaptation to Korea	- Narrowing the educational gap - Development as main members
	Development of multicultural capacity	- Extension of understanding of multiple cultures - Improvement of attitude toward multiple cultures
	Establishment of multicultural identity	- Understanding the language of the country of origin - Understanding the culture of the country of origin
Park Geun-hye Government (2013-2016)	Equity in educational opportunity	- Development of a variety of aptitudes - Improvement of basic academic skills

Source: Kim, H. G., & So, K. H. (2018). A study on changes of the nature of multicultural education in Korean multicultural education policy documents. *Multicultural Education Studies*, 11(2), 59-83.

Table 3*Contents of multicultural education of Korea*

Period	Contents	Sub-contents
Participatory Government (2006-2007)	Understandings about Korea	- Korean language - Korean culture
	Recognition of multiple cultures	- Recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity - Respect for other cultures - To overcome cultural exclusion

Lee Myung-bak Government (2008-2012)	Understandings about Korea	- Korean language - Korean culture
	Multicultural identity	- Bilingualism - Culture of the country of origin
	Recognition of multiple cultures	- Recognition of multiple cultures - Attitude toward multiple cultures
	Educational growth	- Basic academic skills - Career exploration
Park Geun-hye Government (2013-2016)	Understandings about Korea	- Korean language - Korean culture
	Recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity	- Understanding other cultures - Attitude towards other cultures - To overcome cultural stereotypes - Understanding diverse languages
	Educational growth	- Basic academic skills - Career exploration

Source: Kim, H. G., & So, K. H. (2018). A study on changes of the nature of multicultural education in Korean multicultural education policy documents. *Multicultural Education Studies*, 11(2), 59-83.

awareness education for all students and support for multicultural students were created. Also under the policy objective to make a multicultural-friendly environment, the multicultural capacity of pre-service and in-service teachers was emphasized, leading to the development of multicultural education lectures and training programs for teachers. At the municipal level, decentralization and autonomy of Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education for planning and implementation of multicultural education were asserted, but state-level legislation for multicultural education and budget allocation did not proceed accordingly, letting ordinances arbitrarily regulate multicultural education.

At the last continuity and extension stage (2012-2015), a standardized Korean language learning program – Korean as Second Language (KSL) – was invented, and other intensive support for difficulties of multicultural students like help for access to education by exclusively responsible coordinators, 1:1 mentoring for basic

academic learning and opportunities for career exploration were provided. In addition, the extension of multicultural awareness education for Korean national students was discussed as well as multicultural education forum has been held by the central multicultural education center. And to enhance the effectiveness of the policy, cooperation between related departments and association with the local community have been increased. However, for the further development of multicultural education, Yang et al. (2017) and Choi (2018) suggest some macro-level changes: a national vision for multicultural education, comprehensive development plans with regular monitoring and evaluation of practices of policy, creation of a legal basis for multicultural education, and making integrated governance among Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and Ministry of Education.

Policy changes after 2016 are referred to in the research of Cho and Chung (2022). They make three developmental periods of educational support policy for migrant-background students: introduction and establishment of foundation (2006-2011), systematization (2012-2014), and strengthening and advancement (2015-2021). Most of all, in 2015, a support team for multicultural education was set up in the Ministry of Education, and the extension of multicultural awareness education was included in the main tasks with the increased number of practical programs, which indicates primary changes for the advancement of multicultural education policy. Moreover, psychological intervention for migrant-background students and the Stepping-Stone School program to help migrant students adapt to new school life before the beginning of school was instituted.

As explained above, Korean multicultural education policy has changed by a tug-of-war between the assimilation multicultural approach and the liberal multicultural perspective, and various projects and activities have been devised, developed, and vanished. Then, what interventions and activities are included in the

current multicultural education policy? First, to ensure access to education for migrant-background students including refugees, the Ministry of Education supports the whole process of admission and transfer of them with Multicultural Education Support Centers (Ministry of Education, 2021b). And particularly for the refugee children, they distribute admission and transfer information materials with video and mailing so that they can (re)start schooling without delay. Another main project implemented with the policy is to help migrant children learn the Korean language and Korean culture. The Ministry of Education has developed a specialized curriculum, learning materials, and evaluation package for a Korean as Second Language (KSL) program to teach Korean to migrant or foreign students (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020a). KSL Korean classes can be separately set up within Korean public schools considering the number of multicultural students while they attend normal classes during the day in school, or students who need Korean language learning can be transferred to another school which is entrusted with Korean language instruction for less than one year (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020a). Otherwise, a specialized Korean language teacher can be deployed to a school where it is demanded. In Korean classes, from daily spoken language to lexicon and grammar to be used in the text and school subjects, Korean in various circumstances can be learned along with Korean culture (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020a).

But not only is Korean language learning pursued, but also bilingualism to learn the languages of their countries of origin is promoted with the distribution of learning materials and bilingual speaking contests. Besides, to help the improvement of basic academic skills and to address other difficulties in study, a 1:1 mentoring program with university students operates, and supplementary textbooks in Korean and other languages have been made to support the learning of students (Ministry of Education,

2021b). Also, career guidance with video and ‘Dream Letter’ mailing materials has been implemented, as well as psychological support is provided, utilizing the school counseling system and associated institutes in the local community (Ministry of Education, 2021b).

In order to enhance the multicultural awareness of all students, including Korean nationals, the Ministry of Education appoints multicultural education policy schools at the elementary and middle school level (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020b). In the policy school, multicultural awareness contents are encouraged to be involved in school subjects and a variety of school activities like student clubs and after-school programs (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020b). Also, an increase in multicultural awareness in the local community and students’ households is prompted by the association of multicultural programs of multicultural education policy schools (National Institute for Lifelong Education, 2020b). Above all, to assist the multicultural capacity of teachers, multicultural education is encouraged to be included in the curriculum for pre-service teachers and the training program for in-service teachers.

To examine the virtual implementation of policy, a large volume of studies research the awareness of teachers who are the working agents of multicultural education policy, but Cho et al. (2010) directly investigated the gaps between policy and the school field (Yang et al., 2017). They figured out several limitations in policy implementation and raised some criticism about the policy practices First, education for cultural diversity and multicultural awareness is often narrowed down to an indirect knowledge-based introduction to Korean culture and other foreign cultures. Contents about human rights, cultural diversity, or social justice to cover the philosophical or theoretical depth of multicultural education are rarely discovered. Second, bilingual education to encourage native language learning and practice is

mostly converted to foreign language learning. Intense bilingualism is hardly found. Third, general Korean students, parents, and teachers are often excluded from multicultural education in general schools, and in multicultural education policy schools, multicultural education targets entire students with higher frequency. However, it is chosen as a measure of the expense of the allocated budget and reaction to complaints from multicultural families rather than an educational decision of the schools. Fourth, most multicultural education programs are implemented in non-formal education forms so the consistency of education cannot be ensured. At last, multicultural education is inclined to be practiced with an assimilation-oriented purpose rather than with the inclusion of cultural differences of multicultural students.

2.2 Experiences of Refugees in Korean Education Settings

As societal and educational attention to multicultural education has been increased in Korea, a variety of researches have been conducted about the experiences of multicultural students and their parents at different school levels; for example, school adjustment of multicultural students and the variables affecting it, their relationship with other peer students, participatory experiences of multicultural parents, the role of school parent to marriage immigrant mothers, and a unique case study from low-income multicultural family (Park & Oh, 2014; Park et al., 2015; Park & Chung, 2022; Kim et al., 2015; Jang & Shin, 2015; Kim, 2014; Nam & Kim, 2012; Jeon, 2015). However, most of the studies focus on marriage-immigrant families or do not clearly distinguish migrant backgrounds, so specific experiences of refugee children and parents in schools are hardly covered except in a few studies.

Among such researches, Kim et al. (2020) broadly investigated educational challenges and opportunities that refugee children and parents, specifically, encounter by revealing their subjective experiences in public Korean schools. They interviewed 11 refugee parents in various educational settings (from kindergarten to high school) and eight refugee children from middle school to university, including two drop-out students. Refugee parents usually experience a wide range of challenges such as a lack of understanding of the Korean school system, communication problems with teachers, less participation in school events, exclusion from the education welfare system, gap between parents and children because of cultural and linguistic barriers, difficulties in guidance for children and helping their study, challenges to solve problems for admission and in schools, and the effects of precarious legal status and economic conditions on child's education. Moreover, they require translation services and Korean language classes for themselves and ask for diverse after-school programs for children's growth and the security of their children's stay in Korea. On the other hand, refugee children experience other hardships such as an education vacuum before and during the movement, difficulties in the process of admission or transfer, deficient accessibility to Korean language learning, school adjustment or maladaptation with the supports or discrimination from schools, identity issue as refugees and Muslims, and challenges outside schools such as supporting families and precarious legal status. In spite of some challenges, they hope for a better future through education as well. In summary, in the research of Kim et al. (2022), it is disclosed that refugee parents and children experience diverse structural and cultural exclusion in schools and wish to have a better system and supports to melt down the barriers and achieve the future they dream of quality education.

Another research carried out in a different educational setting, kindergarten, is

the case study of Yeom et al. (2022). They interviewed and observed 7 kindergarten refugee children, and reported some challenges and opportunities that refugee children have. At the first time when refugees and Korean children meet, their different appearances make them differentiated from and strange to each other. But as time goes by, they become familiar, and the differences turn into beauty in their minds, according to the authors. They are friends now and don't have a reservation to hang out and get along with each other. Social relationship with other children changes, yet some structural exclusion of refugee children remains. Refugee parents cannot participate in the education of children in the reason of language barriers and there seems no special engagement for translation or communication. Moreover, because of limited legal rights in a wide range of social affairs, refugee children are excluded from some educational activities like specialized economic education programs. Nonetheless, refugee children show autonomy and initiative in other fun activities by leading other friends and sharing their life and culture with others too in those activities.

Kim et al. (2013) examined extensive living conditions of refugee children taking asylum in Korea, and they found out several educational challenges that refugee families come across – for example, financial difficulties, lack of information about school admission, language barriers to communicating with teachers and the school, visa and legal status issues including statelessness of children, linguistic and cultural gaps between parents and children, and teachers' lack of understanding about multicultural students. Accordingly, some policy implications they suggest: developing a birth registration policy for stateless refugee children, providing financial support for refugee families, and ensuring high school or university admission.

Ahn and Kim (2017) investigated the life of refugee children using grounded

theory methodology. They interviewed social workers and refugee parents and figured out the psychological effects of displaced lives without stable legal status and inclusive social environment and strategies that refugees use to overcome and make their lives either adaptive or non-adaptive. Through the process, education can be hope for the future of refugee children, and significant figures met in school, like teachers, can be a breakthrough or help for them. Ahn and Kim (2017) suggest that critical global citizenship education should be expanded to promote multicultural and human rights awareness for students, and teacher training should also include the same multicultural content. Moreover, psychological counseling support for refugee children and parents needs to be developed with comprehensive cooperation governance between the government, schools, private institutes, and local societies.

In response to the needs of refugees, elementary school teachers are also struggling at the front line under insufficient national education system support (Kim et al., 2020). Several difficulties on the side of teachers are discussed: for example, translation infrastructure for daily communication, scarcity of teaching and learning materials, incomplete Korean language learning system, slow improvement of the Korean language of students, lack of support for normal academic coursework, refugee students' troubles in peer relationships, cultural differences, lack of understandings about refugees, and confusion with indecisive future of refugees. But they provide help for their students as much as they can and those experiences make them grow as teachers.

Although a small number of researches on refugee children and parents' educational experiences in Korea were conducted, still refugees' educational experiences and needs in Korean public schools are under-researched. The voices of refugees should be represented much more than now so that multifaceted approaches to enhance the educational environments for refugees can be sought further.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Acknowledging the gap in researches and the demand for an investigation of refugees' experiences in school, in this chapter, the methodology of the study will be presented to show how this research fills the research gap.

3.1. Research Design

This study aims to find out the school experiences of refugees and their suggestions for Korean education. In this regard, qualitative methodology is considered appropriate for the study since it is helpful to understand participants' experiences and interpretations and draw a holistic picture of what is questioned, accepting multiple perspectives and interpretations of participants (Creswell, 2013).

Among the approaches in qualitative methodology, the case study is adopted in this research. A case study is a practical approach to “investigate a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009). Furthermore, a case study allows a range of variables to be examined simultaneously within a bounded system (a case, in other words) as they emerge in any research phase (Gerring, 2004; Creswell, 2013). Since refugees' school experiences can be affected by the school and local environments, selecting a case with a specific school and local community can help attain refugees' cohesive backgrounds.

In this consideration, refugee children attending MJ elementary school (pseudo name) in Itaewon in Seoul and their parents are selected as the case of the study. Itaewon is located in the Yongsan district in the middle of Seoul, Korea's capital city.

Yongsan district is where the most significant number of refugees reside in Korea at the municipal level (Ministry of Justice, 2022c), and Itaewon neighborhood is where the second largest number of foreign people dwell in Yongsan district. Thus, a large refugee community is anticipated to be in a more multicultural-friendly local environment. In addition, MJ elementary school, one of two elementary schools in Itaewon, has around 40 percent multicultural students. The school is a multicultural education policy school and has specialized Korean classes for multicultural students needing Korean learning. Thus, the school can be considered to take a pioneering role in practicing multicultural education policy, and this school context can have the benefit of revealing the pros and cons of the policy through the voices of refugees.

3.2. Participants Selection

The qualitative researcher selects participants purposefully who can “inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). In this respect, participants of this study were selected by purposive sampling strategy, and they are the children who regularly attend after-school programs at GH non-governmental refugee children center (pseudo name) in Itaewon and their parents. The NGO center provides after-school activities to young elementary refugee students, and I volunteered at the NGO center for about one year during the research period. There, I met refugee children periodically (usually once a week) and sometimes their parents too (usually mothers). With this opportunity, I could make some relations with the Itaewon refugee community members and build a good rapport with them. Due to the relationships and engagement with the community, I could get an insider perspective. However, because I am not in refugee status, if children and parents I met at the center could participate in my research, I

thought insider and outsider perspectives could be balanced. (Creswell, 2013, pp. 56, 145-178). Therefore, I decided to recruit participants from the GH center.

Furthermore, refugees come from various national backgrounds and speak different languages, but I can only speak Korean and English. So it was practically hard to hire translators of different languages for the small number of participants. However, most of the refugee children and parents whom I met at the NGO center can communicate in Korean or English with me. In this regard, I selected participants from those who can communicate in either Korean or English.

After recruiting and screening, three mothers and five children voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, and their basic information is summarized in Table 4 below. This paper uses identification codes to ensure the anonymity of participants and protect their personal information. In the codes, P means ‘parent’ and C means ‘child.

The P-1 participant is the mother of the C-1, her only child, and they came to Korea four years ago. They are the Rohingya people who are a minority ethnic group in Myanmar with a faith in Islam religion, and because of the violence against the Rohingya group in the country, the P-1 participant moved to Korea with her daughter. She does not have any relatives or family members in Korea but to find a safe place to live, decided to leave her country. Fortunately, they got an F-2 visa (recognized refugee status) recently after a long wait, and it relieved so much stress about her precarious and indecisive life. Her daughter, the C-1 went to kindergarten in Itaewon, and now is a second-grade student at MJ elementary school.

The P-2 participant is the mother of the C-2 participant and she is from Côte d'Ivoire. She has a husband who is a Nigerian and another kindergarten daughter. She and her two kids have recognized refugee status, and both of her

Table 4*Information of Participants*

ID code	Age/ grade	Sex	Country of origin	Legal status*	Length of stay (years)	Memo
P-1	41	F	Myanmar	RR	4	mother of the C-1
P-2	35	F	Côte d'Ivoire	RR	8	mother of the C-2
P-3	43	F	Mali	RR	18	two elementary school children with two teenage children graduated from Korean elementary schools
C-1	2 nd grade	F	Myanmar	RR	4	child of the P-1
C-2	2 nd grade	F	Côte d'Ivoire	RR	Born in Korea	child of the P-2
C-3	4 th grade	F	Côte d'Ivoire	LS	Born in Korea	
C-4	3 rd grade	F	Côte d'Ivoire	LS	Born in Korea	
C-5	1 st grade	F	Stateless	LS	Born in Korea	mother`s country of origin: Burkina Faso

* RR: recognized refugee

LS: temporary D-4 visa as a measure to protect the right to education for children whose parents do not have approved legal refugee status but maintain long-term staying in Korea

children were born in Korea and got early childhood in Itaewon. The oldest daughter, the C-2 participant is in her second grade at MJ elementary school.

The P-3 is a recognized refugee from Mali. She came to Korea in 2004 and first settled down in the countryside in Suwon then moved to Itaewon in 2012. She has five children who were born and have grown up in Korea and has another child who is waiting for birth in her womb. Her first and second children are secondary school students who graduated from MJ elementary school, and the next two children are going to the school. As much as her length of residence in Korea, she has had diverse

experiences in Korean schools.

The C-3 and C-4 children are from Côte d'Ivoire, and the C-5 is from Burkina Faso. They are all born in Korea, but because their parents did not receive approved legal status in Korea, they did not have appropriate status too. However, several months ago, thanks to the policy to ensure the temporary D-4 visa for students who have stayed in Korea in a long term, they are guaranteed a safe stay until they graduate from high school. However, the C-5 child remains stateless, not having the nationality of Burkina Faso, the country of origin of her mother neither Korean citizenship.

3.3. Data Collection

The primary research method is the individual semi-structured interview. Each participant made an appointment with the researcher for an interview, and the interview was carried out one time. The interview place was the NGO center, either their house and the researcher recorded and transcribed all interviews.

Regarding children participants, a round of interviews lasted from 40 minutes to 1 hour. Before starting the interview, considering the power issue between adults and children, they were assured that they could raise any questions at any time during the interview if they did not understand the questions or remarks of the researcher (Hill, 2005). In addition, they were ensured that they could say “No” or disagree with the researcher (Hill, 2005). After reminding their rights during the interview and the process, the interview started with the prepared interview question. However, the interview mainly followed the children's unique stories, and other questions were asked following the flow of the interview. Parents participants can have a more extended concentration than children, so their interview lasted from 50 minutes to

one and a half hours.

All interviews were recorded, and participants were informed of it in the research consent form and before the interview. Recording files were deleted after transcribed, and transcript files were saved in a separate folder with the password on the researcher's computer. Transcription was carried out in the language of the interview, and during the coding process, English translation was conducted for the crucial quotes for the Korean interviews. While transcribing and translating, I tried to maintain the primary and initial meaning of participants' remarks, although there were some expressional and grammatical changes to adjust them in academic writing.

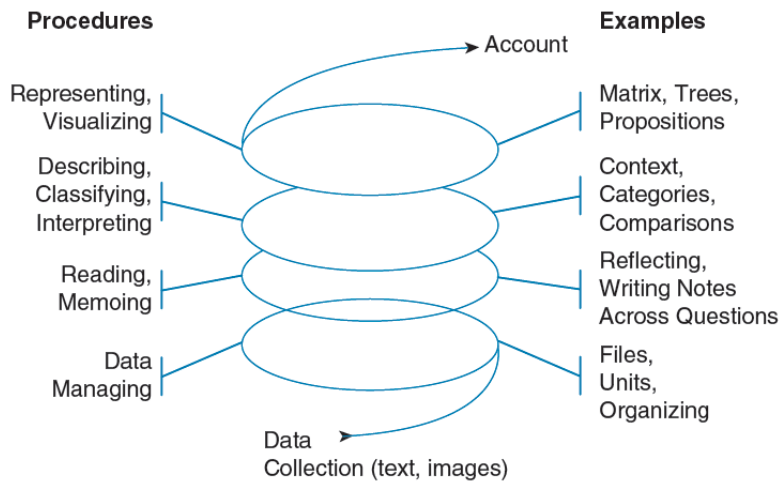
Besides the interview method, the researcher's reflection on observation and teaching experiences at the volunteering center is included as a supplementary data collection method. I participated in Korean and mathematics supplementary classes for refugee children at the center and a few other non-academic activities like physical and musical activity. I also had opportunities to interact with their parents and family and know some school issues. Therefore, direct interaction with refugee children disclosed many aspects of their personality, mindset, behavior, and relationship with others. Furthermore, I could indirectly and informally understand the school and house environment. To enhance the validity of the interview data, I analyze the informal data I get from my reflection. It is a complementary data source, given that direct observation in the school setting is not available to me.

3.4. Data Analysis

With the written data after the transcription, data analysis was started. According to Creswell (2013), researchers go through spiral steps during the data analysis (Figure 2). After collecting data, I first tried to be familiar with it by reading

Figure 2

The data analysis spiral



Source: Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.

it repeatedly and reflecting on what is revealed in the process with memos. By reading repeatedly and roughly organizing the data, all data could be sketched in my mind, and I could come up with some main ideas to navigate the data later on. After that, full-scale description, classification, and interpretation of the data began.

Among others, thematic analysis to reveal the essence of the experiences of refugees is undertaken for this research (Creswell, 2013). Individual participants' data are analyzed into codes where repeated or interrelated words, statements, ideas, feelings, or challenges are aggregated. After the coding process was finished for each participant, prominent and common codes among participants were grouped into themes by comparing the codes between participants. In this process, the researcher's interpretation of the data and the context of the participants were counted, and I tried to keep the research questions in mind to find the most relevant themes for the study.

Moreover, through the whole analysis process, the depth or effects of experiences were most counted to find overarching themes for all the participants, not depending on how often specific codes come out from participants. Codes and themes were revisited several times until more clear, cohesive, and rigorous findings were finalized.

One thing that I kept in my mind while analyzing is that whereas this study focuses on the refugees' subjective experiences, "people can report on their motivations and emotions only to the extent that they are aware of them and only in the manner that they have come to interpret them" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.6). Because of it, there can be tension between subjective interpretation and the reality out there, and it causes the researcher to admit the limitation of exploring the personal accounts of individuals and to keep asking why and how the experiences are made (Easton, 2010). In addition, a researcher should "be aware of the limitations on his or her capacity to access to the experiences of another person" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.6). Considering limitations, I tried to reveal and organize the experiences of refugees carefully.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

According to the Code of Ethics of American Research Association, several ethical issues in conducting research were addressed. First of all, before having interviews, informed consent from research participants were taken. They confirmed that they are well informed of this research and want to participate in the study voluntarily. Especially for children participants, considering power dynamics between adults and children, it was articulated verbally and in the consent form that they can decline the research participation, and it would not affect the relationship

with me at all in the NGO after-school center. To protect the children's rights and help them to understand the research better, legal guardian of children participants were contacted as well to let them know about the research and ensure that it is not forcible research as well as there is no harm if they don't participate. Moreover, when I needed to contact the refugee parents first by phone, I used the official phone of the NGO center so that they felt safe and knew that their personal information is also protected. This action was undertaken to help not only the children but also the parents because they might have some challenges understanding the research only with the paper due to the language barrier, and they need to be assured that it is not related to the NGO. Consent form were prepared both in Korean and English with easier words and expressions to facilitate understandings of participants about the research.

Another ethical issue is collecting and saving personal information, and for a vulnerable group, it could be a more sensitive matter. During the interview, personal information necessary for analysis were asked such as age, sex, country of origin, legal status, and length of staying in Korea with their consent because based on the demographic backgrounds, experiencing in schools or understanding their experiences could be different. For keeping confidentiality, the collected personal data were saved in a digital file locked with the password, and each participant's name were replaced with the identification code for analysis and presentation in the thesis. The researcher was responsible for personal information management, and data were not shared with anybody. In addition, the elementary school name is the case of this study and the name of NGO center which research participants recruited from and engage with are presented in pseudo-name in the thesis to keep anonymity and confidentiality.

3.6. Limitations

This research is significant because it tries to show school experiences, but this study has some limitations too. First, the bounded case of the study can acquire some consistency in terms of the environmental aspect that affects participants' school experiences, but it could also work as a limitation of the study. Itaewon in Seoul accommodates many foreigners and refugees, so a relatively culturally diverse local environment is expected. Also, the MJ school has a higher multicultural student population, which can provide a distinguished educational environment for students compared to other local communities and schools. Therefore, extension and generalization of the participants' experiences in this study can hardly be achieved. In addition, the participants attend elementary school, so the stories of refugee students at other school levels cannot be included in this study. But the strength of this study lies on the same point that close and in-depth analysis could be achieved by focusing on a certain group of people and their experiences.

Second, in terms of the constitution of the participants, there are several points to be mentioned. All participants of the study are female since participants are recruited from the GH NGO center, where approximately 70 percent of children are female students. Also, according to the communication level criterion, female students are selected due to their better communication capacity in Korean or English. Also, parents who engage in the children's educational activities in the center are mostly mothers. For these reasons, only female participants joined the study, and an imbalanced gender ratio is a study limitation. Moreover, refugees maintaining humanitarian sojourner and refugee applicant status could not participate because not many refugees in the center hold such legal status.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

This chapter will organize the findings of the study. This study wants to detect the experiences of refugees in Korean schools and the ways to make Korean education better for them. After having individual interviews with three refugee parents participants and five refugee children, four themes and three themes emerged for each participant group (parents and children), and Table 5 summarizes the results. Each theme will be explored with the participants' quotes to vividly convey the thoughts and emotions of refugees in the following papers.

4.1. Parents

4.1.1. Inclusion / Exclusion

Since 2004 when she first came from Mali and settled down in Korea, the P-3 participant has lived a life of many hardships, and in the meantime, she became the mother of six children. Her two oldest children graduated from MJ school and the next two children are students at the elementary school. Shortly after starting the interview, she mentioned teachers who were willing to help children adapt to school and learn. In particular, when the P-3 participant's family didn't have a recognized refugee visa, and her oldest child attended elementary school in Suwon, the principal of the elementary school told her he would take good care of him and her other children in the future at school. When her family moved to Itaewon, he called MJ school in person to ask for good care of her children, and when they first went to the school, the vice principal of MJ school came out to welcome them. Due to the care of teachers, her children can start the new school in a more inclusive mood.

Table 5*Themes and codes*

Group	Theme	Codes
Parents	Inclusion / Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive relationships with teachers • Concerns for kids about discrimination • Experiencing discrimination • Wishing for inclusive relations without discrimination • Learning how to live peacefully in a community
	Language learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication problems • Improved Korean learning program • Wishing for learning other foreign languages
	Academic achievement for a better future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Education is everything in this generation” • Good education system of Korea • Achievement of the lost dreams • Randomly provided help for studying from teachers • Using after-school programs instead of expensive private education • Efforts to help children’s studying and difficulties • Need for encouragement from teachers and its relief effects
	Cultural differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good social order in Korea • Problems in schools because of cultural differences and different social norms • Worries about learning individualistic culture of Korea • Halal food in the school lunch • Concern for school uniforms and how to dress up
	Inclusion / Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everyone is my friend” • Perceiving discrimination • Experiencing discrimination
Children	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for excellency in Korean dictation and difficulties • Desire for experiencing diverse activities • “Math is the hardest one” • Help from Korean class • Losing confidence and experiencing negative emotions due to the bad reaction of teachers • Being intimidated and hard to express one’s feelings and opinions • Importance of compliments and encouragement from teachers
	Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive self-image • Re-recognition of identity from others • “I love both my country and Korea”

The principal took a lot of care of us because we were the only foreigners in the school and we didn't have a visa at that time. He said he would raise my children well. When we moved to Seoul, the principal even called MJ Elementary School in person and asked to look after my kids. When I and my kids first went to the school, the vice principal welcomed us. The principal is such a warm and nice person.

Refugee parents have some supportive relationships with teachers and they know that teachers are helping their children in many ways. However, to some extent, refugee parents are worried about discrimination against their children from friends at school. The P-2 participant who is from Côte d'Ivoire reported that even though discrimination against black people can be observed many times, her child (the C-2 participant) did not experience discrimination in school yet. However, she is concerned that it could happen in the future to her children and traumatize them.

***P:** Sometimes I communicate with my kid's teachers and they say she is doing well. She adapts very well. Maybe that's because she was born here. Sometimes, for kids who were born overseas but go to school in Korea, it could be difficult. But she adapts very well. She never complains nor has bad experiences. I think they don't discriminate.*

***R:** Don't you think that discrimination occurs in school?*

***P:** Other older kids maybe feel discriminated. But they are still young kids. So I don't think so.*

***R:** Are you afraid or worried about discrimination against your children?*

***P:** Yes. Sometimes I'm afraid because it happens everywhere, not only in Korea. I'm worried because I don't want my kids to experience it. Because it can traumatize kids.*

*(**R:** researcher; **P:** participant)*

When it comes to discrimination, MJ school has benefits because its environment allows national, ethnic, and cultural diversity. In relationships with other friends, refugee students do not get a lot of stress because of the differences that they have. The P-3 participant articulated her opinion on it.

Unlike before in Suwon, there are a lot of multicultural students here, which makes my children have less stress. I think this is really good. Because in Suwon, my children were the only foreigners, so they were teased a lot. And they kept saying “why is my skin color different from others?”, “why only am I dark?” But here they don’t think about that.

Despite the relatively more diversity-allowing condition, discrimination against refugee parents is discovered in school, and the P-3 participant talked about her experiences and observation of the discriminative attitude of teachers at school.

Once, I went to school to get something for my child and met the 6th-grade homeroom teacher of my second child. And she said, “Who are you? Why are you here?” in a suspicious tone. Normally, when you meet an adult in school, you would think he or she would be a parent and treat respectfully. But she didn’t. When I said, “I’m a parent of a student”, then she changed her attitude. I want teachers to have the same attitude when they treat us. (...) Foreign children like my kids can do wrong in school, and sometimes it makes teachers hate their parents too. I saw teachers treat Korean parents very naturally but speak to foreign mothers in an angry tone. Teachers even didn’t make eye contact with foreign moms, and it means that they don’t like them because of the child’s problems. And foreign mothers couldn’t speak Korean well and they couldn’t understand what teachers talked to them, which makes teachers

annoyed again. Teachers say that they treat everyone in the same way, but that's not true. I am not saying every teacher is bad. There are good teachers too. But I want everyone to be treated in the same manner. We have different skin colors, but we are human beings like any other person. We should not discriminate against each other.

Refugee parents believe that school should be a place where peaceful coexistence and tolerance toward others must be taught to students, not hostility based on differences. In light of past and current experiences of refugee parents, a school can be a violence-making system where a culture of hostility, unequal position in the social hierarchy, and even physical harm can be reproduced, or on the other hand, it can be a peace-building system where cooperative, harmonious and respectful culture between different-identity groups can be created with more equitable intervention for a vulnerable group. The P-1 participant, a member of the Rohingya ethnic group, underwent extreme violence and discrimination in her country, and during the interview, she strongly proclaimed the role and importance of education in making peace or violence in society.

For kids, schools, teachers, and social environments are very important. If in schools, teachers always convey hate speech, children will be brainwashed. After ten or twenty years while keeping hearing hate speech, children's minds will be totally changed. In my country, 99 percent of teachers were Buddhist. So they had a lot of discriminative speech and attitudes toward Muslims. During their pre-service training time for teachers, the education ministry uttered hate speech too. They taught them bad things like how to discriminate against Muslims, and the teachers followed. So the whole country is destroyed because of the hate speech! When the Myanmar government killed a lot of Rohingya

people, all citizens including teachers wrote comments about the news. Do you know what they wrote? "Kill Rohingya. Kill! Kill all! Kill! They are animals!"

In Myanmar, discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities was widespread and it penetrated schools where hatred against Muslim and Rohingya people was continuously solidified by teaching and learning practices. This reproduction of aversion and violence eventually led to the commitment of brutal genocide against the Rohingya people, and in the process, schools functioned as a tool to legitimize the violence by indoctrinating people with hostile ideas. For this reason, the P-1 participant asserted the power of education for making a violent or peaceful society, and now she wants Korean schools to teach respectful attitudes and humanitarian spirit to her child and other students to make and keep a peaceful society.

***R:** Then what do you expect your daughter to learn from schools, teachers, or her friends?*

***P:** Good behavior really. Good thing. Good character.*

***R:** What do you mean by 'good'?*

***P:** It means she can communicate with others respectfully and politely. I don't like fighting. I like a very peaceful life. I love peace because our country was not like that. So I always say to her, "Don't fight each other." I like Korean people because they are disciplined and polite as well as respect each other. (...) I serve humanity. This is what my father taught. He said, "Don't leave in the world only for yourself. Do something for your society." So if I can do a small thing, it is also okay. I teach the same thing to my daughter. If you have something, you share it with another person.*

As vividly demonstrated in the interviews with refugee parents about their and their children's experiences, a school can be a place where supportive, inclusive, or discriminative, exclusive interaction can happen. Refugees were victims of violence caused by discrimination and hostility, and Korean schools can be a place of repetition of the past or a hope for a warm and loving community.

4.1.2. Language learning

One of the biggest difficulties that refugee parents face when they first settle in Korea is the language. Since communication is a basic means in all areas such as in school, work, and social relations, the difficulties faced by refugee parents due to language barriers are multiplied. To solve this problem, all parents who participated in the study have been learning Korean; as a result, the P-1 and the P-2 parents have some Korean skills for casual communication in their daily lives, and the P-3 participant is able to speak Korean fluently enough to conduct all interviews in Korean. But they all had difficulty communicating with their teachers at first. When children first entered kindergarten, they had the most difficulties, but thanks to their efforts to learn Korean, some difficulties were resolved in elementary school. However, the need to translate still exists and refugee parents depend on translation apps, not professional translation help.

***R:** Were there any difficulties that you faced when your daughter first went to kindergarten?*

***P:** There were no challenges. The only difficulty was language. I couldn't understand the Korean language, so sometimes it was difficult to communicate with the teachers. They wanted to explain to me about my kid or let me know*

something, but I couldn't understand them. Because many teachers couldn't speak English but only Korean, the communication was really bad.

R: *Then when you had any questions, how did you do?*

P: *I used translation apps on the phone or called some friends to ask for a translation.*

R: *Did you try to learn the Korean language? Do you attend a Korean learning program or language center?*

P: *Yes. I'm studying online. Because I'm working, I can't go to any center. I'm doing online.*

R: *How about in elementary school? Do you still have some communication problems?*

P: *The elementary school is better because I can understand a little bit of Korean. But if there is something that I can't understand, I use translation apps too.*

According to the P-3 participant, Korean language learning opportunities for refugee students have diversified, and she participated in a Korean language program for multicultural parents organized by the Ministry of Education. The program provides the opportunity for parents of multicultural students to learn Korean first and teach Korean later to both their children and other multicultural students whose mother tongue is the same as theirs. She said the program benefits refugee parents in terms of learning Korean and simultaneously having a job. She is currently unable to work as a Korean language teacher due to pregnancy, but she was satisfied with the programs.

P: *The problem is language. But things get so much better than before. School teaches Korean to multicultural parents too. We didn't have that in the past.*

There are mothers like me who came from abroad. So the Ministry of Education made a creative method to utilize multicultural parents to teach multicultural students. Parents first learn Korean and then teach it to foreign students. When people come to Korea first, they can't speak Korean. But if I understand Korean and can teach it in my native language, they can understand. But because of the unexpected pregnancy, I cannot work now.

R: *It sounds great program. You must be disappointed.*

P: *Yes. Other mothers are working now and my friend teaches in the GH Itaewon refugee kids center as a Korean teacher.*

R: *I think I know her. I was surprised that a foreign mother taught Korean in the center.*

P: *Yes. It is helpful for me and my children. It can be a job as well.*

However, most parents still find opportunities to learn Korean outside of school, and schools do not seem to provide refugee parents with various Korean language learning programs. The P-1 parents are currently learning Korean through personal connection, and the P-2 mother is taking online courses.

As for native languages or other foreign languages like Arabic, refugee children cannot learn them in schools but should search for a private educational institution or civil immigrant center. According to UNHCR, three durable solutions for refugees are voluntary repatriation, local integration in the host country, and resettlement in a third state (UNHCR, 2011). Plus, a transnational future without geographical bounds can be another option for refugees to seek opportunities (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2019). Refugee participants in this study do not have Korean nationality nor citizenship, and children remain foreigners, although they were born and raised in Korea. Notably, stateless children and children saying without approved refugee

status have precarious legal status, and their stay in Korea cannot be guaranteed. Basically, refugees can leave Korea with a high possibility intentionally or unintentionally, and learning languages other than Korean is essential to them to sustain their lives in any circumstances. Refugee parents realize this reality and they assert more wide foreign language options and frequent learning time in schools.

They are foreigners. They have to learn other languages. And we don't know the future. Maybe in the future, they may not stay here. Even many Korean students learn other languages because they want to have better opportunities. We cannot live with only one language now. You can't go anywhere with only one language. It's like you only live inside your house. (...) I think the easiest way to teach other languages is to learn at school. There are private education institutions but not everybody can afford them. Maybe they take one hour to study the other languages. It will be better and more helpful. Also in the MJ elementary school, 30~50 percent of children are foreigners.

However, Korean language learning is the primary issue in school, and refugees need to find opportunities to learn their native language or other foreign languages on their own outside of school.

4.1.3. Academic achievement

Children's academic performance is also a cause of stress for their parents. In particular, refugee parents wish but cannot help their children because of a language barrier.

P: When they brought homework, I couldn't help them. Because I could not read and understand Korean. After I moved to Seoul, I decided to learn. Now I can

help my elementary-school-aged children. But I can't understand middle-school school subjects.

R: *But that is still amazing!*

P: *I only can help elementary school children. If they could not follow now, it would be much harder when they go to secondary schools. Teachers said Korean and math are the most important and it would be helpful to read, write, and solve as many problems as possible. I'm trying to make them study as much as I can.*

R: *But you might find it hard sometimes.*

P: *You are right. It's hard. Foreigners like me normally do not make our children study separately at home. But in Korea, they bring homework, but we cannot help. Our children usually do it by themselves. Maybe we can help if it's math, but if it is Korean, we can't read nor understand it. Our moms have some trouble helping children's studies.*

In schools, when refugee children cannot understand a class well, teachers probably explain several times. However, it depends on the decision of teachers and when children need more help, parents look for other options outside of school. But they cannot send their kids to private institutions like other Korean students given their financial condition. The demand for academic help from refugee children piles up but the school intervention does not resolve the problems enough. Let's hear about the experience of the P-3.

In the countryside, there was no private education and there were not many students. So after school, school teachers could take supplementary classes like Korean and math classes for our kids. But here, there is not much school homework, and all the kids go to private education institutions. Teachers cannot

teach students after school when they don't understand well, and students should study on their own. It is a bit different and makes my children hard. But they have after-school classes and sometimes teachers also take care of my children at their discretion. It is helpful. But I feel so sorry for my kids because it is hard to financially support their studies as much as they need and want. Relatively after-school classes are cheaper so my children take those classes.

Despite the discouraging reality, the encouragement and commitment of teachers are hope and relief for parents. Even when children do not show great academic performance, support, compliments, and comfort from teachers are valuable power to make parents and children keep up with the efforts.

All the teachers we met were really good people. I think my child was doing badly, but the teacher complimented him. They said, "He is doing great at school. But he finds something difficult so please guide and teach him at home too." I am really worried when I think my children do not have good academic performance at school but teachers encourage both me and my children. On the contrary, when teachers say that my children fall behind and it sounds like a big problem, I wanted to attribute it to the teachers because it was so distressing. I sometimes told to myself "Teacher, you didn't teach my children well! What should I do?" I wish teachers say to students like my children, "Other friends had a hard time just like you. If you learn hard, you can do well. You're a special person and I know you're still doing hard." If they say things like that, I think it'll make my child feel better.

When refugee parents talk about the education and the future of their children, they often recall their past experiences that their life and dreams were destroyed.

Because of the social injustice present in the national systems and the threat of physical and direct violence against them, refugee parents were forcibly deprived of the opportunity to access or continue their education and had to flee from their home country. Violence in their country makes refugees could not reach their full potential nor attain the future that they dreamed of, forcing them to live totally unexpected displaced life. But in Korea, they can hope for a new life trajectory for their children. As an effort to mitigate the structural barrier in respect of educational opportunity and success in the future, children from refugee families are ensured to access Korean public schools, and hence, refugee parents can expect that their children receive quality education and have better futures than themselves.

P: When I finished secondary school in my country, I wanted to go further and have more experiences, so I came to Korea. I first came here for studying, but something happened in my family. After then, the story totally changed.

R: Then do you have any expectations in terms of the education of your kids? Because you wanted to study here but unfortunately couldn't finish what you wanted to do.

P: Yes. I want my children to get a better education than me. Education is everything in this generation, not like before. School is very important to them. I remember in the past in Africa, they said education is not necessary because whether kids go to school or not, they can work later. The only money we needed. But it is not like this now. If you need money, which work can we do without education now? Kids first need to finish their education and later they can follow their dream or anything they want to do in their lives.

The P-2 parent participant suddenly became a refugee after she left her country and came to Korea for studying and pursuing extensive life experiences. However,

unforeseen danger happened to her family, and she couldn't finish her study nor return to her country again. She was put in a vulnerable situation all of sudden, and the country that she visited with an expectation to explore a new part of the world became an asylum country. She understands that receiving education and acquiring knowledge and skills in schools are prerequisites for having better jobs and opportunities in life. Hence, she wishes her two daughters to get quality education in Korea and have a chance to live a more colorful life than herself by achieving their dreams in the end. This aspiration of her is vividly shown in her interview.

In another case, a refugee parent projects her hope to break the social injustice she experienced in the past on the future of her child and wishes that her daughter can achieve her lost dreams.

In the future, I hope my daughter to be a doctor or an immigration official. I was a very outstanding student in the class. I got good grades enough to go to medical university. But our government, they prohibited me from going to medical university because it is a high position in society. I lost my hope. And I hate Myanmar's immigration law. Myanmar's government didn't recognize our citizenship. All of my family like my father, mother, and forefather didn't have ID cards. My country's government is so bad and the public never follows the law. If you pay money, you can do everything. If you have power, you can do everything. Our country doesn't have any laws nor regulations. So that's why I hope my daughter to be an immigration officer and if we will get Korean citizenship, we will serve the Korean public. My time is over. My daughter may be luckier than me.

When we had the interview, the P-1 participant often flashed back to the past when the mixed emotions of elated expectation and frustration still remain and linger.

She is a member of the Rohingya ethnic group, and because of different ethnicity and religion, the Rohingya people had terrible and comprehensive discrimination from their country, Myanmar. Fortunately, she had a chance to get an education until secondary school because her father was a leader of the Rohingya community as well as a principal of a school for Rohingya youth. However, she could not achieve her dream to be a doctor in the end because the government didn't allow her Myanmar citizenship and even prevented her from getting tertiary education to impede the acquisition of a higher position in society not only for her but also the entire minority group which she belongs to. This discouraging experience raised her thirst to have a more equitable society within her, and it is reflected in her wishes for her child in a way to serve the citizens by promoting a more equal society.

I pray a lot so that our kids are healthy and become great people. If they have some problems, I can't sleep. I from time to time think about why I suffer from many hardships and sometimes I want to die. So I just pray hard so that the kids can do well, and a lot of good things happen to them.

Like all the other parents, refugees wish for a better and great future for their children. It seems a kind of relief and reward for their thorny path of life as well.

4.1.4. Cultural differences

In the interviews, refugee parents present the pressures that they feel when they are asked to learn a new Korean culture suddenly and quickly and even to teach them to their children. Schools reflect the culture of a society and have a visible and invisible code of conduct for students in classes and relations with people. However, unless refugee students could not understand Korean culture well and do not behave

in appropriate Korean ways, it could lead to misbehavior of children in school, deterioration in relationships with teachers and students, decreasing self-esteem, and even affecting academic activities. But for refugee parents, it is hard to know what school would be like and what they need to teach their children to help them better adapt to school life.

To be honest, Korean culture is different from ours, and mothers can't speak Korean well. So it is hard to guess or understand how Korean schools would be and what problems our kids could have. Mothers don't know unless their kids tell us. Children were born in Korea, but the culture at home and the culture at school are different. We need to teach our kids what they shouldn't do or can do at school, but it is difficult. The cultural norm in daily life or how to talk to people in this community, we couldn't teach all these things enough in advance to our children.

In fact, when I volunteered at the refugee children's center, I had a chance to hear about some psychological and behavioral difficulties from their school teachers. The dichotomy between the culture practiced in the house and the culture dominating in school is involved in the hardships, such as corporal punishment practices and interaction between parents and children. However, the burden and responsibility to accept the new culture and adapt to the new society are often laid on refugee children.

Furthermore, refugee parents take asylum in a foreign country whose culture is exotic and different from their home country, and it makes them concerned about their children's accepting new culture in schooling in Korea that they disagree with. Children can learn the culture of a nation throughout schooling, and the P-1 participant is worried about the result of it. The culture of the Rohingya people is more family-and-community oriented than the Korean individualistic culture, and

she does not want her daughter to adopt the mind and attitude of individualism. There seems conflict between refugees' embodied ways of living and the changed environment.

I'm surprised about the Korean family culture. They are living separately. The elderly people need someone to talk to and need someone to take care of them. Parents sacrifice their lives for children but children don't care for their parents. I feel this is unfair. I am worried that since my daughter is growing up in this society and learning in school, she will be like that. I always worry for my daughter. I don't like this lifestyle. The country's development is good but they lose some community-based lives too. Individualism, I don't like it.

Especially, Muslims had trouble due to the school lunch. Because they do not eat meat, if school lunch was only served with meat side dishes, children couldn't consume enough food and nutrients. But in MJ elementary school, Muslim religious culture seems to be considered.

We are Muslims, and we had a hard time because of food and halal. I cannot monitor every time what food my kids eat at school or outside. Sometimes, when side dishes in school lunch are only made with meats, they just eat kimchi and rice. So they are hungry and when they get home, they say, "Mom, I'm hungry. I want to eat something." But now, the school makes other dishes separately for them.

The way of dressing up is another concern for refugee parents. Different cultural expectations for students are working here too.

Many times I see girls wearing short skirts and I'm concerned about it. Because

in my country when you're in school uniform, the skirt has to be down to your knees. I'm concerned that my kids grow up like that. When I see girls wearing short skirts with their school uniform, I don't feel comfortable. I think girls have to dress up decently like boys.

In summary, a lack of understanding of Korean culture and the school system makes refugee parents confused to guide their children, and cultural differences seem to cause some discontent and troubles in their daily lives and educating their children. Between the differences, refugee children are accountable for addressing the conflictual encounters.

4.2. Children

4.2.1. Inclusion / Exclusion

Most of the refugee children participants of the study were born in Korea and have been educated in Korean kindergarten and Korean elementary school. While growing up, refugee children could recognize that their appearance, country of origin, and usable languages are different from Korean national students, but at the same time, they can feel a sense of belonging in Korean society as they develop relationships with Korean friends. Refugee children who joined the study have good and supportive relationships with their friends, and school is where they can feel safe and enjoyable.s

***R:** Do you have some closest friends?*

***P:** Yes! I have lots of friends. (listing the name of 12 friends with Korean and foreign students)*

R: Wow! You have so many friends. Then how did you become a friend to them?

Did you have some difficulties making friends in school?

P: No. I didn't. Because friends first approached me and told me to play together.

R: How did you feel then?

P: I was thankful. I am shy when I first meet strangers but they first talked to me. So I was thankful. (...)

R: Is there someone who can help you to study when it is hard to understand?

P: I ask my friends to help me. And if they can't solve the math problems, I help them. (...)

R: How do you mostly feel about school?

P: Joyful. Everyone is happy when paying with friends!

The C-2 child participant was born in Korea and now she is a second-grade elementary school student. She knows almost every student in the same grade at school since she went to kindergarten in Itaewon, and many students in the elementary school are acquaintances of her. She looks delighted to have many friends in school, and for her and her school friends, different appearance or legal backgrounds do not seem to be important or problematic to be friends with each other. The happiest moment for her in school is when she can play in the playground with her friends during the lunch break, and she said she had not been offended at all by her friends. Similar remarks about friends are often discovered in the interview with other student participants, and generally they have fun and active school life.

However, a couple of refugee children participants spoke about discrimination in school and they expressed uncomfortable feelings about it. The C-3 participant talked about the different attitudes of her teacher toward foreign students and Korean students in her class. She is going through difficulties in studying and following

classes, and her teacher looks irritated with her because of it. The C-3 participant perceived that the teacher only scold foreign students like her, not Korean students, which discloses that perception and narrative about discrimination work in her mind.

R: Why do you hate your teacher at school?

P: My teacher always screams only at me.

R: Screaming only at you?

P: No, not just me. To other friends too. But not Koreans.

R: Doesn't she scream at Koreans?

P: No.

In another case, the C-4 participant was annoyed by one Korean classmate who repeatedly teased different skin color of her.

One friend kept saying that I am brown. But it was no use at all to me. Rather I disputed him, "Do you like if I keep saying you are white?" After that, he apologized to me and didn't do it anymore.

During the interview with refugee children, most children demonstrated a sense of belonging to the school and they maintained good relationships with their teachers and friends. However, students also learn to interpret the different attitudes of teachers as discriminative gestures, and sometimes they were teased for their differences in appearance.

4.2.2. Academic achievement

Learning the language of the country where refugees take asylum is crucial to improving the integration into society (Ager & Strang, 2008). It can facilitate the

self-reliance of refugees, influencing their future employment and social participation, and it is considered a primary intervention that education organizations or language learning programs take over (UNHCR, 2013). According to the multicultural education policy of Korea, refugee students who have no or limited Korean language skills can receive support for Korean language learning in the specialized Korean class in school, and within MJ elementary school, a standing Korean class was installed and operated.

Most of the young participants in the study can communicate fluently in Korean, and they learned the Korean language in their kindergarten and develop it in the Korean class at MJ school. Refugee students usually show their passion and confidence in getting high scores on Korean dictation tests, and to achieve it, they put some effort to study and practice Korean with some help from school teachers. Even when they did not have good grades on Korean dictation tests teachers encouraged them to endeavor. They usually do not use the Korean language with their parents and can get relatively little assistance from their parents for studying Korean. Yet they are keen to develop Korean linguistic skills with the hope to interact with Korean teachers and friends as well as to make teachers and parents happy about their achievements.

(Part of the interview with the C-1)

***P:** I always got 90 points in the first grade, but now I'm in the second grade, so I have to get 100. In the last year, I got 100 points three times and 90 points four times, but I'm going to get 100 now. I have a Korean dictation test next Wednesday.*

***R:** So are you trying to get 100 points?*

***P:** Yes. I have to study hard.*

R: *Wow! Are you confident?*

P: *My teacher gave me the dictation practice paper and it was too easy.*

R: *Then, Korean class and Korean dictation tests wouldn't be hard for you. Right?*

P: *No. I like the Korean class most.*

(Part of the interview with the C-3)

R: *You are really good at Korean. How did you learn?*

P: *When I went to kindergarten, I had a lot of Korean friends. So I tried to speak in Korean because I wanted to talk with them. And I wanted to read books.*

R: *How is learning Korean in elementary school?*

P: *It's difficult. There are a lot of difficult words.*

R: *How is Korean dictation? How many points do you get?*

P: *When I was in first grade, I got 0 point. It's because I didn't study. My teacher told me to study, but I forgot, threw the dictation practice paper in the trash, and kept playing. So I got 0 points every day.*

R: *So what's your score now? What if you take a dictation test now?*

P: *70 points.*

R: *Then how did you get 70 points now?*

P: *When I was in second grade, I didn't want to get zero points again! So I started studying and got 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and even 100 points! And when I got 0 points, my teacher said, "It is okay. You don't have to be sad". Teachers cheered me up.*

R: *Then how did you feel when you heard that?*

P: *I was so happy. I decided to study and get better grades.*

However, according to my teaching experiences and observation in the volunteering center, some children show lower Korean literacy ability to comprehend the written Korean texts. Compared to the reading and comprehension level required for his or her grade, they have difficulties understanding Korean text, which will affect their general academic performance.

Refugee children participants mostly showed their desire to achieve good academic performance and experience a variety of non-academic activities in school during the interview. The most frequently mentioned school subject was mathematics and it was the hardest one for them. But at the same time, they also felt proud of being able to understand mathematical concepts and conduct some calculation skills such as multiplication and division. Their homeroom teachers and teachers in Korean classes facilitate the learning process, but supplementary learning programs refugee children can take outside of school - for example, in an NGO or a private community center in Itaewon also contribute to their academic improvement.

(Part of the interview with the C-2)

R: *How is studying at school?*

P: *It's fun. I like to solve math practice problems by myself! And if you study math, you can use it for anything.*

R: *For example?*

P: *Learning math allows you to have the ability to think. So you can the skill even in the art class!*

R: *It sounds great. Do you have any difficulty while studying?*

P: *Multiplication is the most difficult thing. But I memorized multiplication tables up to 7 because my school teacher promised to give a gift when we collect all tokens.*

R: Good for you. Do you practice with friends?

P: Yes. We also learn a multiplication song in class.

(Part of the interview with the C-1)

P: I memorized 2, 3, 4, and 5 times multiplication tables!

R: Did you memorize everything? Amazing!

P: For 6, 7, and 8 multiplication tables, I memorized a little bit.

R: Then how is studying at school?

P: It is easy because I memorized the multiplication table in the private community center.

R: Was it difficult before you go to the center?

P: Yes. It was so hard. I couldn't memorize even 2 times table at that time.

However, not every student participant enjoy studying and learning at school. The C-3 is a fourth-grade student and she has difficulty catching up with other same-grade students. She loses her confidence in learning and feels intimidated by her homeroom teacher due to her low academic achievement. It affects her relationship with other students too, making her teased by other students.

R: What did your teacher say?

P: "Why can't you study well! Then, you can't go to fifth grade!"

R: How did you feel when you heard that?

P: I was sad. I felt like I am a bad person.

R: Have you told your teacher that you were sad?

P: I can't say any word to her. I wish I were a teacher. If so, I would say "Teacher, you are a very bad person!" (...)

P: All of friends were bad to me. They are bad. In kindergarten, first grade,

second grade, third grade, and even now. When I was in first grade, they made fun of me, saying “You don’t study well.” And even when we played games, a friend told me that I am stupid because I lost. I was about to cry but tried to hold it.

***R:** Then what did you say to your friends?*

***P:** I didn’t say anything to them. I wanted to say something to them, but I couldn’t. I don’t know why.*

In fact, she is a lively and active student in the NGO refugee center. When I heard that she is quiet and does not express her opinion at all in school by the chief officer at the center, I was very surprised. Another discouraging and depressing mechanism in school seems working in her mind. In the interview, she even mentioned that the friends only she meets at the center are her friends, but the classmates at school are not her friends. She said she knows them but they are not her friends.

4.2.3. Identity

In school, when refugee children can share their ethnic, and national identities with other friends in schools, it makes them feel recognized. The C-4 child participant is from Côte d'Ivoire, and her closest friend in school is another girl from the same country as her. Their native language is French, and it is a kind of secret code that only they can understand in school, which gives another dimensional space where the common identities between them can be confirmed and recognized in the Korean public school. Moreover, she reported that one friend who came from Uzbekistan approached her and told that her brown skin is beautiful. They became

best friends after that, and it is another pleasant and memorable moment for her. That is because in school, as refugees' ethnic identity is recognized by others in the interaction with them, it can give a long-lasting positive self-image and a feeling of acceptance to them.

R: Who is your best friend?

P: I am closest to Daniel (pseudo name).

R: Why are you closest to her?

P: We are from the same country. When teachers do other works, we speak French together.

R: I see. Do you have any other close friends?

P: Yes. When I first went to school, a really good friend told me that I looked pretty because I am brown, so we became best friends. It's Kitty (pseudo name)

R: Where is she from?

P: She is from Uzbekistan. (...)

P: My skin is brown but I know I'm pretty. So even if someone says "you're brown and ugly" to me, my heart knows I am pretty, and I trust myself more than others. So it is useless.

For refugee children, their country of origin and Korea are meaningful, and they love both countries. They feel a sense of belonging to two countries.

P: I went to a mart and a Korean person told me that Korea is better than Côte d'Ivoire. He kept asking me why I wanted to go back to Côte d'Ivoire.

R: Then how did you feel then?

P: I hated him. I like my country and Korea.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

Based on the interview data and the emerging themes, several implications for improving schools and education for refugees are found. In this chapter, a couple of discussions and thinking points to make Korean schools better for refugees will be covered.

5.1. Making schools more inclusive

After crossing the territorial boundary, refugees encounter intertwined invisible boundaries (Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2020). Those boundaries are symbolic and built upon one's identity, such as ethnicity, religion, language, and values that they consider pivotal (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Unfortunately, the invisible boundaries often work to distinguish "us" and "the other," and the refugee-receiving society can forge solid and indestructible borders of segregation or, on the contrary, weaken the level of barriers while refugees navigate the boundaries and struggle to address them. (Yuval-Davis, 2006). When a society is more closed with the distinct lines between the nationals and refugees and excludes people with different identities, it can bring about more discrimination towards people perceived as "the other." However, if it is the opposite with a more diverse, tolerant, and cooperative culture of peace, inclusion and a sense of belonging can be acquired by a broader range of social members (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Antonsich, 2010).

Furthermore, in a country that consists of multiple groups of immigrants, the original cultures that each immigrant group brings in and maintains are exchanged in a social space. The ways of encounters and interaction among the cultures can be

examined in light of how the minority cultures are positioned against mainstream culture (Teske Jr & Nelson, 1974; Jenks et al., 2001). When the mainstream culture has significantly higher power and is forcibly imposed on the minority groups without respect for the way of living, identities, and customs of minority groups, legitimization of the discrimination against migrants can occur. Refugees are also exposed to cultural interplay in the hosting society, and cultural domination of mainstream culture or more equitable co-existence between the culture of nationals and the ones of refugees can be observed.

This inclusive and exclusive mechanism can also be found within schools, notably in the practice of teaching and learning as well as in relationships among school members (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018). That is because school is not isolated from the external systems but interacts with them, so the external political, social, and cultural systems determine the various aspects inside schools (Owens & Valesky, 2015, pp.100, 116-117). Therefore, The “structural inclusion” of refugees in the national education school system ensures refugees’ physical existence in school, giving them accessibility to the quality of education for refugees, but “relational inclusion” involves a sense of belonging and social cohesion between refugees and national students (Dryden-Peterson et al., 2018; Chopra & Dryden-Peterson, 2020).

In particular, refugees were targets of physical attack and the psychological threat of violence in their home countries in the past, so they could not help but flee from the insecurity and widespread structural exclusion, and cultural discrimination underlying the visible violence. They finally migrated to Korea, where direct physical harm toward them is less likely, but as foreigners and disadvantaged groups in the society, they possibly face cultural and relational boundaries between hosting communities and themselves, which can deteriorate the ultimate peaceful existence they searched for.

As a result of the study, it is discovered that refugee children and parents have happy relationships with teachers and students in Korean schools. They get help, support, love, and a sense of belonging through relationships. However, they also experience discrimination from teachers and other students and wish for equal treatment with Korean nationals. Direct and indirect experiences of discrimination in school occupy some parts of their memory, and problems in relational aspects prohibit them from having a more safe, supportive, harmonious, and cooperative co-existence with others. In addition, refugees struggle to adapt to the mainstream Korean culture in school without consideration from the hosting community about their original cultures, and refugee parents are often concerned about the unwanted acceptance of way of thinking and living for their children. As for native languages or foreign languages that they need and want to learn, they have to find learning opportunities outside of school, costing them extra money.

To make Korean education and school more inclusive for refugees, discriminative words, attitudes, and culture should be replaced with a culture of accepting and celebrating diversity. Even though multicultural education policy establishes multicultural awareness education and recommends various cultural exchange events, multicultural awareness education that is actually implemented in schools ends up introducing the cultures of Korea and other foreign countries and philosophical foundations for a multicultural society, human rights education, critical thinking, and practical methods are not taught enough (Cho et al., 2010). In addition, multicultural education is mainly planned and conducted based on the assimilation perspective, focusing on Korean language and culture education. Therefore, more research about multicultural theories, multicultural education curricula and learning materials, and teachers' pedagogy should be conducted at the national level. How multicultural education is conducted on school sites should be monitored and

assessed. Furthermore, native languages and foreign language learning programs need to be installed.

5.2. Helping academic performance

Refugee parents are displaced from their home country and often lose education opportunities. Therefore, they wish for better education and academic achievement for their children, and it is well disclosed during the interview. In addition, refugee children also enjoy learning at school and receive help from teachers and Koran classes. However, they also experience some difficulties following the classes, and because of their low academic performance, they sometimes experience psychological distresses. Moreover, refugee parents find it hard to help their children study due to the different curricula of their home countries and the language barrier.

Most of the refugee children participants separately studied in the Korean class established for Korean language learning and other important subjects, especially mathematics. However, the monitoring and assessment of the impact of the classes have not been researched, and improvement and extension of the supplementary classes seem to be needed. Moreover, refugee parents want to give more education opportunities, such as private education, but they cannot afford the cost. After-school programs can be alternatives, but financial support for educational expenses is allowed to the recognized refugees. Governments and schools should find how to extend the benefits of after-school programs for other refugees. Furthermore, subjects covered in the supplementary classes should be extended.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Korea, which has a history of its people being refugees, began to share the international humanitarian responsibility to protect refugees around 30 years ago. As the global refugee crisis is getting serious in terms of its dimension and effect, Korea is also affected by it, such as the cases of the arrival of the Yemeni refugee group in Jeju island and the ‘Operation Miracle’ to evacuate Afghanistan people. As a way to ensure the right to education of refugees, the Korean government allows refugee children to enter Korean schools, and multicultural education policy supports them in general. However, the educational experiences of refugees in Korean schools and their needs to be addressed in Korean education have not been investigated well enough. With the problem awareness, this study is designed to find the reality of refugees in Korean schools.

Considering the large refugee community in Itaewon in Seoul and the accessibility of refugees to compulsory education in Korea, refugee children who go to MJ elementary school and their parents are selected as the case of the study, and interviews are conducted with three mothers and five girls. After the analysis, four themes for the parents' group and three themes for the children group were found, and one of the common themes emerging from interviews of parents and children is the inclusion and exclusion issue in school.

Different identities in terms of nationality, ethnicity, religion, and culture and the manifestation can be embraced by the hosting community by respecting the differences or can be discriminated against. Refugees have supportive relationships with teachers and other students but sometimes experience discrimination. In the multicultural education policy, multicultural awareness education for enhancing the

knowledge and attitudes of respecting and accepting differences is adopted as a goal and program, but the ways it is implemented and practiced need to be monitored and improved. To do so, more diversity-understanding culture and a non-discriminative school environment need to be fostered. In addition, native and foreign language learning should be reinforced in schools. To learn other languages besides Korean, refugees find outside-of-school programs. Moreover, academic achievement is essential for the future of refugee children, but current supplementary classes have some limitations. Also, after-school programs can be financially supported only for recognized people. Extension of the classes need to be considered.

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국문 초록

난민들의 초등학교 경험과 개선 방향
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지난 10년 동안 전세계 난민의 수가 증가해 왔고 그들 중 절반은 18세 미만의 어린이들이다. 또 예상과 달리 난민의 망명 기간이 평균 10년에서 25년으로 길어지면서 난민의 권리를 보호하기 위해 난민들을 망명국으로 통합하자는 주장이 확산되고 있다. 유엔난민고등판무관실은 이 조치의 일환으로 난민들을 유치국의 공교육 시스템에 통합해 난민들이 양질의 교육을 받을 수 있도록 하는 기초를 발표했다. 한국은 1992년 난민협약 가입 이후 한국으로 망명을 요청하는 난민의 수가 증가하고 있고, 최근 예멘 난민들의 단체 입국과 아프가니스탄 특별기여자 입국 사건을 통해 난민에 대한 국민적 관심과 논의가 양산되었다. 이렇듯 국내 난민 문제에 대한 심각성이 대두되면서 난민 보호 문제도 많은 논의를 낳고 있다.

한국의 경우 난민 아동은 법적 지위에 상관없이 모두 한국 교에 다닐 수 있어 난민들의 교육 접근성이 보장된다. 그러나 한국 학교에 다

니는 난민들의 교육 경험은 거의 연구되지 않아 난민 학생들이 학교에서 어떤 어려움을 겪는지, 그들의 욕구가 어떻게 충족되는지, 그리고 학교 교육이 난민들의 자신과 사회에 대한 이해에 어떤 영향을 미치는지에 대한 이해는 상당히 제한적이다. 난민들의 주관적 경험과 한국 교육에 대한 관점을 이해하지 않고서는 그들을 위한 적이고 포용적인 교육을 제공하는 것이 불가능하다. 그런 점에서 난민들이 자신의 경험을 이야기할 수 있는 공간을 만들어 교육과 학교를 안전하다고 느끼는 곳으로 탈바꿈시키고 더 나은 미래를 찾도록 해야한다.

이러한 문제의식을 바탕으로 본 연구는 1) 난민들이 한국 학교에서 겪는 도전과 기회는 무엇인가? 2) 난민들이 생각하는 난민들을 위한 교육을 만들기 위해 한국 학교가 해야 할 것은 무엇인가? 연구 질문에 답하기 위해 서울 이태원 MJ 초등학교에 재학 중인 난민 아동과 그 부모를 대상으로 사례 연구를 실시했다.

연구결과 난민부모를 대상으로 포용과 배제, 언어학습, 더 나은 미래를 위한 학업성취, 문화적 차이 등 4가지 주제를 분석하였다. 난민 아동에 대해서는 포함과 배제, 학업 성취, 정체성의 세 가지 주제가 발견된다. 난민들은 학교에서 지원적인 관계를 가지면서도 차별을 경험하는 것으로 드러났다. 특히 난민 부모들은 본국에서 극심한 폭력과 배제를 경험했기 때문에 한국 학교들이 다른 학교들과 평화롭게 공존하는 교육을 할 것으로 기대하고 있다. 게다가, 새로운 문화에 적응하는 것은 난민 부모들과 아이들에게 어렵고, 모국어와 다른 외국어들은 학교에서 배울

수 없다. 난민 아동들이 보다 포용적인 학교 환경에서 서로 다른 정체성을 공유할 수 있도록 자국의 문화와 언어를 지키기 위한 지원이 더욱 발전할 필요가 있다. 마지막으로, 난민들은 좋은 학업 성적을 원하고, 학교들은 국어 보충 수업과 수학 보충 수업등을 통해 그들을 돕고 있었다. 하지만, 그들은 교사와 학교의 더 많은 개입과 지원이 필요하였으며 학업적 도움의 확대가 검토될 필요가 있었다.

주요어: 난민 교육, 초등학교 교육, 다문화 교육 정책, 포용

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