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Korean Immigrant Discipline and Children's Social Competence and Behavior Problems

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Abstract

The goal of this correlational study was to explore the relationship between Korean immigrant discipline (e.g., positive, appropriate, harsh discipline) and children's social competence and behavior problems. Self-report data were collected from 58 mothers and 20 fathers of children aged from three and eight. Only paternal harsh discipline was positively correlated with children's behavior problems. Among specific discipline strategies, maternal physical affection, correcting misbehaviors, and reasoning were positively correlated with children's social competence. Paternal physical punishment (e.g., spanking, hitting, raising arms) was positively correlated with children's behavior problems. Immigrant fathers need to learn alternative ways of managing children's misbehaviors.

Keywords

Korean immigrant; discipline; children; social competence; behavior problems

The number of minority children has increased dramatically in the United States (US) during the last 30 years. National studies indicate that immigrant children tend to experience lower social competence and more behavior problems at entry into US kindergarten (Rathbun, West, & Hausken, 2004; Welston & West, 2004). These children fall further behind from 1st to 3rd grade (Rathbun, et al., 2004; Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, & McLanahan, 2005). Therefore, fostering social competence and preventing behavioral problems should start at an early age (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005). Children's social competence is defined as abilities that specifically enable children to achieve personal goals in social interactions while simultaneously maintaining positive relationships with others (Dirks, Treat, & Weersing, 2007; Rubin & Rose-Krasnor, 1992). Lack of social competence is manifested as behavior

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problems (Burt, Obradovic, Long, & Masten, 2008; Dirks, et al., 2007; Rubin & Burgess, 2002).

Studies found that parenting is linked to the social competence of European American children (Zhou, et al., 2002). Minority children's social competence and behavior are challenged because their family is dealing with two cultures, which have different norms (Kim, Han, & McCubbin, 2007). For example, some of the discipline strategies that were brought from Korea by recently immigrated Korean parents (e.g., spanking, lack of expression of affection) do not fit well in the social norms of the US (Kim & Hong, 2007). When parents possess different beliefs about childrearing that deviates from cultural norms of society, they may develop negative relationships with their children, which in turn impairs normal child development (Rubin & Burgess, 2002).

However, not much is known about how Korean immigrant parents' discipline is linked to their young children's developmental outcomes. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between Korean immigrant discipline and their children's social competence and behavior problems. The results will expand our knowledge of the links between discipline and young children's development in Asian immigrant populations using a sample of Korean immigrants.

Children's Social Competence and Behavior problems

Social competence is an important set of skills for children to function successfully in school and community environments (Dirks, et al., 2007; Rivera & Rogers-Adkinson, 1997; Rubin & Burgess, 2002). Socially competent children know how to effectively behave and accomplish a given role in various contexts. Children who lack social competence tend to have behavior problems (Rubin & Burgess). Deficiencies in social competence may place children at risk for poor academic performance, social maladjustment, peer rejection, and psychopathology (Burt, et al., 2008; Elliot, Racine, & Bruce, 1995; Parker, Rubin, Erath, Wojslawowicz, & Buskirk, 2006). Deficiencies in social competence and behavior problems are further related to poor social interaction and conduct problems in adolescence and adulthood (Burt, et al., 2008; Rivera & Rogers-Adkinson, 1997; Rubin & Burgess, 2002; Webster Stratton & Taylor, 2001).

Discipline

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 1998), discipline includes rewarding desired behaviors, reducing undesired behaviors, and promoting positive parent-child relationships. In Western culture, discipline strategies for promoting desired behaviors are termed positive discipline (e.g., hugging, praising); those for reducing undesired behaviors are called appropriate discipline (e.g., ignoring, timeout) and harsh discipline (e.g., yelling, spanking) (AAP, 1998; Kim & Hong, 2007; C. Webster-Stratton, 2007a). American parents of young children sometimes or often used timeouts (69%), explanation (66%), and taking away privileges (66%) (Wissow, 2002). Harsh discipline also is commonly used as 85% of parents yell at their children (Gallup, Moore, & Schussel, 1995) and 94% use physical punishment (Straus & Stewart, 1999). The public's attitudes toward spanking as an acceptable form of regular discipline has decreased from 94% in 1960s to 61% in 2000 (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003). The AAP (1998) recommends using positive and appropriate discipline rather than harsh discipline.

Discipline and Children's Social Competence and Behavior Problems

Parenting is the source of children's social competence because it provides the context for children to develop emotional and cognitive resources to explore environments as well as

expectations and skills necessary for positive human interaction (Hartup, 1985; Jones & Prinz, 2005). Studies indicate that effective parenting practices such as positive reinforcement, dyadic problem solving, and parental involvement are related to children's positive self-esteem, pro-social skills, academic performance, and peer relationships (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Rubin & Burgess, 2002). When parents are responsive, warm, and emotionally available, their children tend to be socially competent, well adjusted, and well accepted by their friends (Cummings, Cummings, & Burgess, 2002). In contrast, harsh, critical or inconsistent parenting, low monitoring, and permissive control are related to children's aggression, conduct behavior problems, and delinquency (Chamberlain, Reid, Ray, & Fisher, 1997; Patterson, et al., 1992; Reid & Eddy, 1997; C. Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001).

The relationship between harsh discipline and children's developmental outcomes has been mixed. In some studies, spanking was related to psychological and behavioral maladjustment (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Gershoff, 2002; Larzelere, 2003; McLoyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo, & Borquez, 1994; Swinford, DeMaris, Cernkovich, & Giordano, 2000). In a study, however, spanking was negatively related to African American girls' later aggressive behaviors, whereas it was positively related to European American boys' later aggressive behaviors (Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997). African American parents use of spanking is more a consequence than a cause of problem behaviors in children (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Whaley, 2000). The outcomes of physical punishment could be quite different when it is used as a primary way of disciplining compared to when it is used as part of a scope of discipline strategies (Larzelere, 2003; Wissow, 2002). If children perceive spanking as a reasonable method of using parental authority, their behaviors may improve (Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Whaley, 2000). Indeed, the children's perception of the punishment mediated the relationship between caregivers' rejection and children's psychological maladjustment (Rohner, Kean, & Cournoyer, 1991). The lack of parental support and involvement was more strongly associated with psychological maladjustment than was the use of physical punishment (Simons, Johnson, & Conger, 1994). After controlling for parent involvement, physical punishment was left unrelated to adolescent aggression, delinquency, or psychological maladjustment (Simons et al.).

Korean Immigrant Discipline

Korean immigrant parents are usually depicted as warm and sensitive (Choi, 1995; Kim & Hong, 2007), warm and moderately controlling (Kim, 2005, 2008b), or authoritarian yet warm (Shrake, 1996). Korean immigrant parents use a range of discipline strategies in managing children's behaviors (Kim & Hong, 2007). To increase desired behaviors they commonly use praising, hugging/kissing, and tangible rewards as positive reinforcements. To decrease undesired behaviors they commonly use corrections, yelling/scolding, warning/threatening, spanking, reflection and reasoning, children raising their arms in the air for a certain amount of time (e.g., 5 minutes) while sitting or standing, and giving extra homework.

Parents identified spanking and less hugging/kissing as Korean style discipline whereas timeout, sticker chart, adding/removing privileges, extra work chores, reasoning, praising, and showing affection were categorized as American style discipline (Kim & Hong, 2007). Recent immigrant parents were not as familiar with American style discipline. As parents adapted to American society, they tried to stop spanking, began using timeout, and used more praising and hugging/kissing (Kim & Hong, 2007). Korean immigrant maternal warmth was positively related to children's social competence (Kim et al., 2007) and adolescents' psychological adjustment (Kim, 2008b). However, it is not known how Korean immigrant discipline is related to their children's social competence and behavior problems.

Research Question

This research explores the question, ‘what is the relationship between Korean immigrant parental discipline and children’s social competence and behavior problems?’ This study explored this question using mother and father data separately since previous studies found the impact of parenting on children differs between Korean immigrant mothers and fathers (Kim & Cain, 2008).

Methods

Design

This study used a cross-sectional and correlational study design using self-report questionnaires.

Subjects

The sample consisted of a convenience sample of 20 fathers and 58 mothers living in the Pacific Northwest. There were 15 mother-father couples responding for one child. With the sample size of 20 and 58, there was 54–97% of power to detect true correlations from .28 to .74 between parental discipline and children’s developmental outcomes. Korean immigrants in this study were defined as persons born in Korea of Korean mothers and fathers, residing in the US at the time of the study and American citizens, permanent residents, or temporary residents to cover a spectrum of perceptions.

The mean age of the participants was 37.36 (4.22) years for mothers and 39.40 (5.44) years for fathers. Mothers lived in the US for an average of 10.38 (6.04) years and fathers lived for an average of 12.09 (7.83) years. Mothers received an average of 14.84 years (3.41) of education and fathers received an average of 16.39 (1.61) years. Seventy-five (96.15%) participants were born in Korea, 1 (1.28%) born in the US, and for two (2.56%) data were missing; American citizens ($n=36$, 46.15%), permanent residents ($n=27$, 34.62%), and sojourners ($n=13$, 16.67%) were included. In terms of their ethnic identity, 73.08% ($n=57$) considered themselves Korean, followed by 20.51% ($n=16$) Korean American, and for 6.41% ($n=5$) data were missing. None perceived themselves as American. Their religion was 58.97% ($n=46$) Protestant, 17.95% ($n=14$) Catholic, 5.13% ($n=4$) Buddhist, and 15.38% ($n=12$) no religion. In terms of their marital status, 91.03% ($n=71$) were married, 3.85% remarried ($n=3$), 3.85% divorced ($n=3$), and 1.28% widowed ($n=1$). In terms of annual family income, 20.51% ($n=16$) families had lower than \$40,000, whereas 42.31% ($n=33$) had between \$40,001 and \$80,000, and 30.77% ($n=24$) had over \$80,000. The average number of children was 2.00 ($SD=.56$). The mean age of the children (48 boys and 28 girls) was 6.05 ($SD=1.61$) years and they lived in the US for 4.59 (1.87) years.

Measures

Children’s social competence—Children’s social competence was measured using the Social Competence Scale (C. Webster-Stratton, 2007b), developed by the Conduct Problem Prevention Research Group (Fast Track). It is a 14-item, 5-point Likert-type scale instrument. It assesses parents’ perception of child’s (ages 3–12 years) positive social behaviors, frustration tolerance, and communication skills. Sample items were, “My child is helpful to others,” and “My child thinks before acting.” Scores range from 14 to 70. Higher scores indicate higher child social competence. Predictive validity of the instrument was established and Cronbach’s alpha was .87 for an American sample (C. Webster-Stratton, 1998). Cronbach’s alpha for the current Korean immigrant study sample was .89.

Children's behavior problems—Children's behavior problems were measured using the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (Robinson, Eyberg, & Ross, 1980), a 36-item, 7-point Likert-type scale instrument. It assesses behavior problems common for children 2 – 16 years of age, such as dawdling, whining, and lying. Two scores can be obtained and were used in this study: an Intensity score, which indicates the frequency with which the behavior problems occur, and a Problem score, which indicates the total number of behaviors parents view as problems. Scores range from 36 to 252 for the Intensity scale and 1 to 36 for the Problem scale. Cut-off scores of 126 for the Intensity scale and 11 for the Problem scale have been used for screening children at risk for conduct problems (Robinson et al.). Scores on the instrument have been significantly correlated with other established measures of children's behavior problems and independent observations of children's behavior (Boggs, Eyberg, & Reynolds, 1990). Cronbach's alpha for the American parents sample ranged from .86 (test-retest) to .98 (internal consistency) (Webster-Stratton et al., 2001). Cronbach's alpha for the current Korean immigrant sample was .91 for the Intensity scale and .97 for the Problem scale.

Discipline—Discipline was measured using the Parent Practices Interview (C. Webster-Stratton, 2007a). This questionnaire was adapted from the Oregon Social Learning Center's Discipline Questionnaire to use with parents of children ages between 3 – 8 years (Webster-Stratton, 1998). It is a 73-item, 7-point Likert-type scale instrument with seven subscales that measure positive discipline, appropriate discipline, harsh discipline, inconsistent discipline, clear expectations, monitoring, and harshness for age. Based on the findings of Kim and Hong's (2007) study on the first generation Korean immigrant parents' perceptions of discipline, this study focused on three subscales: positive discipline (e.g., praise, hug/kiss/pat, tangible rewards, sticker charts); appropriate discipline (e.g., correction, timeout, take away privileges, reasoning); and harsh discipline (e.g., yelling, threatening, spanking, hitting, hostility). Higher scores indicate a greater tendency to use each discipline strategy. Webster-Stratton and colleagues established predictive validity of the instrument. Cronbach's alpha for American parent sample was .72 for positive discipline, .82 for appropriate discipline, and .75 for harsh discipline (Webster-Stratton, 1998). Cronbach's alpha for the current Korean immigrant sample was .75 for positive discipline, and .70 for appropriate discipline, .90 for harsh discipline.

Procedure

The researchers first obtained approval from the institutional review board and then all study participants completed an informed consent form. Participants were 58 mothers and 20 fathers from 62 families recruited from Korean organizations such as churches and language schools in the Pacific Northwest. The research team visited the organizations, explained about the study, recruited volunteers who signed the consent form, and distributed the questionnaires. When parents completed the questionnaires, they mailed them to the research team in a stamped, self-addressed envelope provided separately for each mother and father. Parents of a child between 3 – 8 years of age were included. When participants had more than one child in this age group, they were asked to answer the questions with just one of the children in mind.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, ranges, and distributions were calculated using SPSS (Norusis, 2006) for mothers and fathers separately. The research question, the relation between discipline and children's social competence and behavior problems, was examined for mothers and fathers separately using the Bivariate Pearson correlations. The relation was examined using the total subscale as well as 16 specific discipline strategies of rewarding children's desired behaviors and decreasing children's

misbehaviors. These strategies were identified in a previous study by Kim and Hong (2007). A generalized estimating equations analysis (Zeger & Liang, 1986) was used to compare mean scores of mothers versus fathers, using the `xtgee` function in Stata. This analysis is like an independent sample t-test but the standard errors and p-values are adjusted to account for the fact that some of the parents are mother-father couples.

Results

Discipline Used by Korean Immigrant Parents

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for three discipline strategies and children's developmental outcomes. Means of the variables indicated that fathers scored higher in all the variables. Results of generalized estimating equation analyses indicated that fathers used significantly more positive discipline than mothers ($z = 3.27, p = 0.001$). There was no significant difference in maternal and paternal appropriate discipline ($z = 0.10, p = 0.92$), harsh discipline ($z = 1.48, p = 0.14$), and reports of their children's social competence ($z = 1.00, p = 0.32$), behavior problem intensity ($z = 0.11, p = 0.92$), and the number of behavior problems ($z = 0.41, p = 0.69$).

Means of both mothers' and fathers' reports of children's number of behavior problems were higher than the cutoff score of 11, indicating these parents perceived their children as having a high number of behavior problems. Forty-seven and 41 percent of children scored higher than 11 in problem score assessed by mothers and fathers respectively, indicating a higher number of behavior problems. For intensity score, 15.8% of children scored higher than 126 as assessed by fathers. No children scored higher than 126 for intensity score by mothers. None of the parental demographic variables were related to social competence or behavior problems.

Overall Discipline and Children's Social Competence and Behavior Problems

As shown in Table 1, no maternal discipline strategy (i.e., positive, appropriate, and harsh) was significantly correlated with their children's social competence or behavior problems. Only paternal harsh discipline was significantly positively correlated with the intensity of their children's behavior problems ($r = .60, p < .05$). Neither paternal positive discipline nor paternal appropriate discipline was statistically significantly linked to children's outcomes.

Unexpectedly, paternal and maternal appropriate discipline was positively correlated with numbers of children's behavior problems, although this was not statistically significant. This could be due to children with more behavior problems receiving more discipline of both types, appropriate and harsh. Perhaps a more appropriate measure of parental discipline strategy would be the ratio of appropriate to harsh discipline. Therefore, post-hoc analyses were done using this ratio, i.e. appropriate discipline \div harsh discipline. Since this variable was highly skewed, a log transform was applied.

Results indicated that mothers used relatively more appropriate discipline as measured by the log of the ratio ($M = 3.5, SD = 3.15$) than fathers ($M = 2.82, SD = 2.42$). Correlating the log ratio with children's outcomes showed that results were in the theoretically expected direction although they were not statistically significant. Fathers' use of appropriate discipline relative to harsh discipline for misbehaviors was positively related to children's social competence ($r = .22, p = ns$) while it was negatively related to the number ($r = -.25, p = ns$) and intensity ($r = -.31, p = .19$) of problem behaviors. Mothers' use of appropriate discipline relative to harsh discipline also was positively related to children's social competence ($r = .26, p = .054$) while it was unrelated to the number ($r = .00, p = ns$) and intensity ($r = -.02, p = ns$) of problem behaviors. Therefore, the correlations between

maternal and paternal use of each specific discipline practice and children's outcomes were examined.

Specific Discipline Practice and Children's Social Competence and Behavior Problems

Table 2 shows the results of correlations between Korean immigrant parents' use of each specific discipline practice for rewarding children's desired behaviors and their children's outcomes. Maternal hug/kiss/pat was positively correlated with children's higher social competence ($r = .27, P < .05$). Paternal tangible rewards were negatively correlated with children's social competency ($r = -.48, P < .05$). No other positive discipline practice was related to children's outcomes.

Table 2 also indicates that not many of the specific appropriate and harsh discipline were related to children's outcomes. Among specific appropriate discipline strategies, maternal correcting of misbehavior and reasoning were positively correlated with children's higher social competence ($r = .41, .28, p < .01, .05$). Mothers' use of removing privileges and giving extra work/chores was positively correlated with children's higher numbers of behavior problems ($r = .32, .38, p < .05$). Mothers' use of removing privileges was also positively correlated with both intensity and number of children's behavior problems ($r = .31, .32, p < .05$). For fathers, only physical punishment was related to children's behavior problems. Paternal spanking was positively correlated with both the intensity and number of children's behavior problems ($r = .74, .59; p < .01, .05$). Paternal hitting was positively correlated with children's intensity of behavior problems ($r = .54, P < .05$), whereas making children raise their arms was positively correlated with children's number of behavior problems ($r = .64, P < .05$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relation between Korean immigrant discipline and their children's socio-behavioral outcomes. Overall, Korean immigrant mothers and fathers reported using more positive and appropriate discipline than harsh discipline. This finding contradicts the previous finding that Korean immigrant parents identified lack of expression of affection and use of harsh discipline as Korean style discipline (Kim & Hong, 2007). This disagreement may be related to (a) the different research methods used in these two studies, (b) adoption of American style discipline, and (c) social desirability.

First, Kim and Hong's (2007) study used qualitative study design whereas the current study used a questionnaire survey. In the qualitative study, Kim translated the Parent Practice Interview (C. Webster-Stratton, 2007a), which was developed to measure common discipline strategies in America, into Korean. In order to assess the cultural validity of this instrument, Kim interviewed Korean immigrant parents about their views on each discipline strategy in the instrument. During this process, parents had a chance to reflect on their use of each discipline strategy in comparison with what they observed among Americans. As a result, parents identified spanking and less expression of affection as the Korean style and positive and appropriate discipline as the American style. This finding suggested that Korean immigrants might score higher in harsh discipline than positive and appropriate discipline when using the questionnaire survey.

However, as found in this study, the Korean immigrants scored higher in positive and appropriate discipline than in harsh discipline. This finding may be due to different research methods. In the current questionnaire survey study, a different sample of Korean immigrant parents was asked to fill out the self-report instrument at their home. In answering each survey question parents had to simply choose from the given Likert-scale choices, so parents did not have to compare their practice with what they observed among Americans as in the

qualitative study. In other words, Korean immigrant parents actually use more positive and appropriate discipline than harsh discipline.

Second, this result might indicate that Korean immigrant parents adopted an American style of discipline and there may be a discrepancy between cognitive and behavioral levels in Korean immigrant parenting. That is, cognitively, when newer Korean immigrant parents observed American parents' discipline, they may realize that they use less expression of affection and more harsh discipline than American parents. This might have resulted in a cognitive picture of Korean immigrant discipline as 'lack of expression of affection and use of harsh discipline.' When these newer Korean immigrant parents were exposed to the American culture on a daily basis, they adopted American style discipline consciously and unconsciously, leading to more frequent use of positive and appropriate discipline. Thus parents reported their behaviors with more positive and appropriate discipline than harsh discipline.

Third, it may be related to parents' social desirability. Due to some sensitive issues around harsh discipline, it is possible that Korean immigrant parents might have answered the survey in a way that was more suitable in the American social context. In this case, the information from Korean immigrant parents may not reflect the whole and true picture of Korean immigrant discipline.

Neither maternal nor paternal positive and appropriate discipline was associated with their children's social competence. This finding is inconsistent with previous evidence that positive and appropriate discipline was positively related to children's social competence (Parker, et al., 2006; Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006). In this study, when individual specific discipline strategies were examined, only maternal hug/kiss/pat, correction, and reasoning were associated with their children's higher social competence. For fathers, only harsh discipline was associated with their children's higher level of behavior problems. These findings may be due to three reasons including (a) lack of cultural sensitivity of the research instrument, (b) different range of discipline strategies used by mothers and fathers, and (c) different parental roles assumed by mothers and fathers in disciplining children.

First, the Parent Practice Interview (C. Webster-Stratton, 2007a) may not be culturally sensitive enough when it is used with newer Korean immigrants. Due to different cultural backgrounds between Koreans and Americans, this instrument might not reflect the content of discipline strategies used by Korean immigrants. Kim and Hong (2007) found that Korean immigrant parents identified most positive and appropriate discipline in the instrument as the American style. In particular, recent immigrant parents were not familiar with these styles. This assumption is supported when we look at the mean scores of each specific discipline strategy, which indicate how often respondents used each. For example, the mean score of correcting misbehaviors, which Korean immigrant parents identified as the first step in managing children's misbehaviors (Kim & Hong, 2007), was 5.64 (SD = 1.12) for mothers. In contrast, the mean score of timeouts, which parents identified as the American style, was 2.65 (SD = 1.35) for mothers. When these scores are aggregated to make a mean score of appropriate discipline, the score would be around 4. As a result, this instrument may not have convergent validity when it is used with recent Korean immigrants. Convergent validity is verified when an instrument correlates highly with other variables with which it should be theoretically linked (Burns & Grove, 2005). This also results in low Cronbach's alpha (i.e., .70) for appropriate discipline in this study sample.

Second, the different range of discipline strategies used by mothers and fathers may explain why only paternal harsh discipline was related to children's problem behaviors. Previous studies found that Korean immigrant parents commonly used praising, hugging/kissing, and

tangible rewards to promote desired behaviors whereas they used seven discipline strategies to reduce children's misbehaviors including: corrections; yelling/scolding; warning/threatening; making children raise their arms in the air for a certain amount of time (e.g., 5 minutes) while sitting or standing; giving extra homework; spanking; and reflection and reasoning (Kim & Hong, 2007). In the Korean culture, mothers function as the primary disciplinarians and they use all of the above discipline strategies. Physical punishment is used as a last resort. Wissow (2002) suggested that when physical punishment is used as a small part of a scope of discipline strategies it may not be linked to children's negative developmental outcomes. Therefore, maternal use of harsh discipline might not be linked to children's problem behaviors.

Third, however, fathers' harsh discipline was related to children's problem behaviors because of the different parental roles between mothers and fathers in the discipline process. In the Korean culture, when mothers cannot handle the children's problems they refer the situation to fathers for further disciplinary action. Children who are referred to fathers usually exhibit more behavior problems than those who are handled by mothers only. When fathers discipline these children, fathers usually use physical punishment. The correlation between paternal harsh discipline and children's behavior problems is consistent with previous findings with European Americans (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997). When specific discipline strategies were examined in this study, paternal use of spanking, hitting, and raising arms was correlated with children's behavior problems. Harsh discipline increases the likelihood of further behavior problems, because harsh discipline provides a negative model of behavior, fails to promote pro-social child behavior, and impedes development of adaptive social-cognitive skills (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Patterson & Capaldi, 1991; C. Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001).

It is not quite clear why fathers' use of tangible rewards was negatively correlated with children's social competence. One speculation is that Korean immigrant fathers might try to bribe children with a reward rather than using it contingent to desired behaviors. A few previous studies found that tangible rewards were effective in decreasing behavior problems when they were given to children contingent upon proper behaviors (Raymond, Brett, & Jane, 2004; Robert & Garry, 1996). It also is not clear why fathers reported higher use of positive discipline than mothers. Traditionally, Korean fathers tend to not express their paternal affection toward their children (Kim, 2008a). But, this result may indicate that for those fathers who use positive discipline, they perceive that they use it more than other Korean immigrant fathers which would be their reference group for this behavior. Or it could be fathers giving more extreme answers than mothers because fathers scored higher in all the study variables.

Nor is it clear why mothers' use of removing privileges or giving extra work is positively correlated with a higher number of behavior problems in their children. This may indicate that Korean immigrant mothers use these strategies with children who have more behavior problems. Or, how consistently these strategies were implemented based on established rules may be a factor that influences the effect of these discipline strategies. Improper implementation may reinforce problem behaviors. These issues need to be further examined.

In summary, this study suggested that the relation between parental discipline and children's developmental outcomes differs between Korean immigrant mothers and fathers. This finding is similar to previous other studies in Asians and Asian Americans. For example, the factors related to Korean immigrant adolescents' depressive symptoms were adolescents' perceived maternal rejection and father-adolescents conflicts (Kim & Cain, 2008). Among Chinese, maternal warmth predicted children's emotional adjustment, whereas paternal warmth predicted children's academic achievement (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000). In the current

study, only paternal harsh discipline was associated with children's behavior problems while it was not related for mothers.

This study has several limitations. First, the sample size was small and therefore, generalizability is limited. Second, a sampling bias might have occurred because participants were recruited voluntarily, and might have over represented well-functioning parents who participate in religious and community organizations. These parents might also have a high interest in the parent-child relationship and their children's development. Third, all the data used in this study were self-reported questionnaires from parents, which might have been affected by social desirability in answering the surveys. Lastly, the cross-section correlational design limits the findings of this study; the findings do not explain the cause-effect relation between discipline strategies and children's outcomes. Meanwhile, there are two strengths of the study. First, Korean immigrant maternal and paternal discipline strategies were tested separately to explore the influence of each parent on their children's outcomes. Second, both general discipline practice constructs and each specific discipline strategy was examined to describe Korean immigrant discipline.

The study findings offer health practitioners several suggestions for understanding Korean immigrant parents and providing them with effective discipline strategies. Clinically, health practitioners need to understand that Korean immigrant parents use more positive and appropriate discipline than harsh discipline. This is contrary to what was previously identified about this population. In Korean immigrant families paternal and maternal roles are different. Paternal physical punishment has the strongest association with behavior problems in Korean immigrant children. Therefore, it would be beneficial for Korean immigrant children's development if fathers learned alternative discipline strategies in managing children's misbehaviors.

According to the AAP (1998), effective discipline includes strategies that reward desired behaviors (e.g., praising, hugging/kissing, sticker charts, additional privileges), reduce undesired behaviors (e.g., limit setting, timeouts, removing privileges), and promote positive parent and child relationships. Recently, Kim et al. (2008) found that providing a parenting program is an effective intervention for Korean immigrant mothers in promoting positive discipline. It is not known whether this type of intervention program would be beneficial in changing Korean immigrant fathers discipline strategies. Further research is needed to understand this behavior.

Conclusion

Korean immigrant mothers' use of positive, appropriate, and harsh discipline was not related to their children's social competence or behavior problems. Only paternal harsh discipline was related to children's behavior problems. This may be due to insensitivity of the instrument, social desirability of parents, or Korean parents' use of a range of discipline. Future studies needs to include family relationships when studying the effect of discipline on children's outcomes. Children's perception of parental discipline is also necessary. Use of multiple informants, such as including teachers' and children's reports, and home or classroom observation, may also insure a more objective view of discipline and children's outcomes. Application of longitudinal design will make the findings to be inferred as the causal effect of discipline on children outcomes. The study findings further indicate a need for developing a culturally sensitive instrument that adequately captures the features of Korean immigrant discipline.

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Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and correlations of study variables

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	Father M (SD)
1. Positive discipline	—	.38	-.22	.02	-.15	-.19	4.68 (0.89)
2. Appropriate discipline	.14	—	-.01	.08	.35	-.01	4.19 (0.73)
3. Harsh discipline	-.23	.17	—	-.25	.48*	.42	2.68 (0.96)
4. Social competency	.04	.21	-.11	—	-.26	-.15	45.81 (7.25)
5. Behavior problems – (#problems)	-.02	.10	.10	-.23	—	.62*	12.10 (9.73)
6. Behavior problems - (intensity)	-.05	.30	.09	-.30*	.54*	—	87.63 (23.54)
Mothers M (SD)	4.38 (0.77)	4.16 (0.73)	2.42 (0.82)	45.41 (9.13)	11.93 (9.27)	78.46 (19.32)	—

Note. The upper right side indicates father reports, and the lower left side indicates mother reports.

* p<.05

** p<.01 (2-tailed).

Table 2

Correlations between Specific Discipline Strategies and Children's Outcomes

	Mother M (SD)	Competency	Intensity	#Problems	Father M (SD)	Competency	Intensity	#Problems
<u>Positive discipline</u>								
Praising	6.41 (1.14)	.20	.81	.07	6.40 (.60)	-.21	-.15	-.25
Hug/kiss/pat	6.14 (1.18)	.27*	-.04	.06	6.00 (1.03)	-.02	-.29	.03
Sticker chart	2.16 (1.93)	.17	-.06	-.07	2.15 (1.87)	.17	.05	-.25
Tangible reward	3.44 (1.89)	.09	-.09	-.21	3.90 (2.10)	-.48*	.08	.00
Extra privilege	3.49 (1.80)	-.02	.03	-.04	4.10 (2.00)	-.34	-.04	-.12
<u>Appropriate discipline</u>								
Ignoring	1.70 (0.75)	.04	-.13	-.24	1.72 (1.40)	.05	.00	-.19
Extra homework	1.92 (1.22)	-.04	.15	.38*	2.13 (1.40)	-.36	-.11	.46
Correcting misbehaviors	5.64 (1.12)	.41**	.04	.11	5.63 (1.02)	.12	-.07	.24
Reasoning	5.10 (1.45)	.28*	.04	.01	4.98 (1.43)	.36	-.26	-.01
Timeout	2.65 (1.35)	-.11	.17	.14	2.18 (1.14)	-.12	-.13	.30
Remove privilege	3.20 (1.33)	-.09	.31*	.32*	3.16 (1.15)	-.05	.21	.16
<u>Harsh discipline</u>								

	Mother M (SD)	Competency	Intensity	#Problems	Father M (SD)	Competency	Intensity	#Problems
Yelling/scolding	3.49 (1.38)	.02	.10	.00	3.83 (1.52)	-.20	.25	.44
Threatening	2.53 (1.29)	-.09	-.00	.03	3.28 (1.69)	-.21	-.16	.13
Spanking	1.88 (0.83)	-.19	.16	.14	2.04 (1.27)	-.26	.74***	.59*
Hitting	1.53 (0.26)	-.00	-.02	.08	1.42 (.74)	.12	.54*	.30
Raising arms	1.99 (1.26)	-.20	.03	-.10	2.19 (1.47)	-.01	.47	.64*

* p<.05

*** p<.01 (2-tailed)