Family Resilience: Sojournning Japanese Mothers & Children

November 16, 2017
79th Annual Conference of the National Council on Family Relations
Orland, Florida
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Background

• The number of sojourners in countries other than their home nation for international work assignments has been increasing in the last decades ([BGRS], 2016)

• Japanese companies sending Japanese employees with their spouse, a term coined as “trailing spouse”, and young children to the U.S. (Erogul & Rahman, 2017; Fukuda & Chu, 1994; McNulty, 2015; Shahnasarian, 1991; Tungli & Peiperl, 2009; Winterbottom, 2011)

Limited studies for sojourning Japanese families
Japanese Mothers’ Challenges

• Interaction with medical professionals
• Feeling isolated due to cultural and language barriers
• Lack of practical support and guidance from extended family members
• Lack of spousal support due to husbands’ long working hours.
• Restricted their career possibilities in the U.S. due to language and VISA issues
• Experienced significant psychological distress associated with the stress of living abroad.

Sources: Collins & Bertone, 2017; Ishizaki & Ishizaki, 2001; Ozeki & Mizuguchi, 2007; Takeuchi, Lepak, Marinova, & Yun, 2007)
F. Walsh (2016) : Family Resilience Framework
9 Key Processes

A. Family belief systems
   1. making meaning of adversity
   2. positive outlook
   3. transcendence and spirituality

B. Organization patterns
   4. flexibility
   5. connectedness
   6. social and economic resources

C. Communication processes
   7. clarity
   8. open emotional sharing, and
   9. collaborative problem solving
Objectives

(1) to explore sojourning Japanese mothers’ perceived Key Processes of Family Resilience;

(2) to examine the association of Family Resilience with Marital Satisfaction, Children’s Behavioral Adjustment & Stress-Related factors.
Research Questions

1. 1) What key processes of family resilience do Japanese sojourner mothers in the U.S. report using? 
   2) Which key processes are related to their children’s behavioral adjustment?

2. What is the relationship between Japanese mothers’ perceived family resilience and marital satisfaction?

3. What is the association between Japanese mothers’ perceived family resilience and stress-related factors?

4. What are the proportions of variance in children’s behavioral adjustment explained by mothers’ perceived stress, marital satisfaction, and family resilience?
Methodology & Description of Sample

Main Sample: 6 Japanese Schools in multiple states, n = 107 return

Sample (n = 70 mothers)

- Average age: 38
- Target Child Age: 6 years old
- Length of Time in US: 3 years
- 60% Bachelor or Graduate degree

Questionnaire:

- Demographic Items
- Family Resilience Assessment (FRA; Duncan Lane, 2011)
- Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ; Goodman, 1997; Matsunishi et al, 2008)
- Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm et al. 1986; Sugawara & Takuma, 1997)
- Stress for Life Event: Japanese SLES (Hasui et al., 2009)
- Stress for raising young children in the U.S.

Statistic Analysis: Descriptive Statistics, Zero-Order Correlation, Hierarchical Regression
Results: Research Question 1
Most frequently used key processes:

1. Positive outlook,
2. Transcendence/Spirituality = Belief System
3. Making meaning

Key processes related to children’s adjustment:
• Problem Solving Skill:
  negative association with Children’s Behavioral Adjustment
  \( r = -0.29, p = 0.03 \)
Table 2:  
Perceived Key Processes of Family Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Mean (M)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Outlook</td>
<td>14.96</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcendence</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Meaning</td>
<td>14.29</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>12.04</td>
<td>3.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
<td>11.46</td>
<td>2.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open Emotional</td>
<td>10.97</td>
<td>2.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>8.54</td>
<td>2.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>1.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>2.12</td>
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</table>
Research Questions 2 & 3

Higher scores on Family Resilience:

Q2: significantly *positively* associated with Marital Satisfaction \( (r = .684, p = .000) \)

Q3: significantly *inversely* related to Childrearing Stress \( (r = -.330, p = .006) \)

Stressful Life Events \( (r = -.324, p = .007) \)

&

Children’s Behavioral Adjustment \( (r=-.209, p= .042) \)
Table 3
Correlation Matrix among Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td><strong>Family Resilience</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>.684**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Adjustment Total</strong></td>
<td>-.209*</td>
<td>-.460**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stress-Life Events</strong></td>
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<td>-.328**</td>
<td>.422**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stress- Childrearing</strong></td>
<td>-.330**</td>
<td>-.365**</td>
<td>.479**</td>
<td>.439**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .001.
Research Question 4

• Family Resilience, 2 Stress-Related factors, Marital Satisfaction were significant predictors of Children’s Behavioral Adjustment.

• Comparing the contribution of each variable in the final model, Marital Satisfaction was the strongest factor as a predictor of Children’s Behavioral Adjustment.
Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Predicting Children’s Total Behavioral Adjustment from Stress Related Variables, Marital Satisfaction, and Family Resilience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>R² changes</th>
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<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
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<td>.32***</td>
<td>.32***</td>
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<td>Stress Childrearing</td>
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<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
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<td>.37*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.27*</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.013</td>
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<td>.05*</td>
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<td>0.26*</td>
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<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>-.25*</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
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<td><strong>Final step</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.04*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stressful Life Events</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>2.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
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<td>-.41**</td>
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<td>Family Resilience</td>
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<td>-.28*</td>
<td>-2.00</td>
<td>.050</td>
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</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; *** p < .001. Stress Related variables were entered in Step 1, Marital Satisfaction in Step 2, and Family Resilience in the final step.
Discussion

1. ① Mothers’ frequent use of **Belief System**, further studies may need to examine whether it is only used among sojourning mothers in the U.S.

② Significant relationship of **Problem Solving Skill & Child Adjustment**, as mothers, who have primary responsibilities to solve problems for their children (Arnault, 2002; Ishizaki & Ishizaki, 2001; Nukaga, 2012).

2. ① Significant relationship of **Family Resilience & Marital Satisfaction**, previous study in Japan reported mothers who positively perceived fathers’ attitude for childrearing tend to report higher level of marital satisfaction (Tanaka, 2010).

② Participants in this study consider their spouse as the only family member who can share the responsibility of childrearing in U.S. Further study may need to examine whether this relationship continues with Japanese parents in Japan.
Discussion continue:

3. Significant negative relationship of **Family Resilience & Stress-related factors** supported by a study in Japan:
   
   - Mothers who reported higher satisfaction level of fathers’ involvement in childrearing tend to report lower level of childrearing stress (Tanaka, 2010).

   - Father’s empathic supportive attitude (e.g; listening mother’s story, saying appreciation words) is more important to reduce mother’s stress rather than practical support for childrearing (Nishio, 2013).

   suggesting

   “the importance of father’s involvement for childrearing with empathic and supportive attitude for mother”

4. **Family Resilience, 2 Stress-related factors & Marital Satisfaction** are all predictors of **Child Adjustment**, especially with **Marital Satisfaction**

   suggesting

   “The importance of the parental Marital Satisfaction for child behavioral adjustment”
Limitations & Implications for Research:

Limitations Due to Time and Budget constraints:
1. Small Sample Size
2. No-Random Sampling
3. Self-Report Subjective Data
4. One-Snap-Shot Data (cross-sectional study)
5. Lack of validation tests for Japanese FRA

Implications for Future Research:
1. Larger Sample Size & Random Sampling
2. Need multiple informants to assess child adjustment, from school teachers and child care provider.
3. For deeper understanding of sojourning Japanese mothers’ family resilience, longitudinal and qualitative study may need.
4. To enhance the reliability and validity for Japanese FRA, it may need to be up-dated.
Implications for Practice

• Japanese companies may need to:
  • offer pre-departure training for Japanese mothers and children such as language and multicultural training program.
  • offer medical and educational support system for employees’ children.

• Japanese fathers may need to be more involved in childrearing with supportive and empathic attitude toward mothers.

• Japanese government in the U.S. may need to offer help line services in Japanese for Japanese families during their assignment.

• Family life practitioners may need to introduce and offer marriage education to working with sojourners to improve Japanese mothers’ marital satisfaction with having collaboration of Japanese family studies experts.
References


• Nishio, S. (2013). The effects of father’s nursing behavior on mother’s childcare stress: focusing on mother’s evaluation of frequency of father’s nursing and the discrepancies in the evaluations of father’s nursing between fathers and mothers. Journal of Konan Women’ University, 49. 59-74.


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