

Information Needs of Korean Immigrant Mothers in the United States for Their Children's College Preparation

JungWon Yoon

School of Information, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA
E-mail: jyoon@usf.edu

Natalie Taylor

School of Information, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA
E-mail: ngtaylor@usf.edu

Soojung Kim*

Department of Library and Information Science, Chonbuk National University, Jeonju, Korea
E-mail: kimsoojung@jbnu.ac.kr

ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand the information needs of Korean immigrant mothers in the United States for their high school children's college preparation. A content analysis was conducted for the messages posted to a "motherhood" forum on the MissyUSA website. In total, 754 posts were analyzed in terms of a child's grade, college preparation stage, type of post, and topic of post. The study found that there is a range of information needed at different stages in a child's education. Many of the demonstrated information needs showed similarities to those of other immigrant groups, but there were also community-specific themes, such as an emphasis on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) and standardized tests. The forum was mainly used for factual questions, not emotional support. We concluded that the findings of the study would help researchers in understanding immigrant information needs for the college application process and how information professionals and educators could combine the needs of different ethnic groups to create customized services for them.

Keywords: information needs, information-seeking behavior, online forum, Korean immigrants, immigrant mothers, college preparation

Open Access

Accepted date: September 14, 2018
Received date: September 06, 2018

*Corresponding Author: Soojung Kim
Professor

Department of Library and Information Science, Chonbuk National University, 567 Baekje-daero, Deokjin-gu, Jeonju 54896, Korea
E-mail: kimsoojung@jbnu.ac.kr

All JISTaP content is Open Access, meaning it is accessible online to everyone, without fee and authors' permission. All JISTaP content is published and distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>). Under this license, authors reserve the copyright for their content; however, they permit anyone to unrestrictedly use, distribute, and reproduce the content in any medium as far as the original authors and source are cited. For any reuse, redistribution, or reproduction of a work, users must clarify the license terms under which the work was produced.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preparing for college is a complex process that requires extensive information gathering. A lack of information about college and financial aid (FA) can be a barrier that results in even students with high education aspirations being prevented from attending a college (Kao & Tienda, 1998). The information regarding college preparation needs to be obtained in a timely manner, but finding information can be a daunting task, especially for immigrant parents who lack understanding of or experience with the United States education system.

Previous studies have been conducted on the college choice process of students of different ethnicities/races and parental involvement (Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004; Ceja, 2006; Kim, 2014), and these studies provide insight into the role of parents in the college choice process. Immigrant parents not only have linguistic and socio-cultural barriers but also lack knowledge about the United States education system. Therefore, for information professionals and educators to best facilitate immigrant parents, it is necessary to understand what they need to know to prepare for their children's post-secondary education. However, there is a lack of research on what information immigrant parents seek, particularly for certain specific immigrant groups. To fill this gap, the current study aims to understand Korean immigrant mothers' information needs for their high school children's college preparation.

Koreans are well-known for education fervor. Education is one of the central motives for Korean families' immigration to the United States (Choi, Cranley, & Nichols, 2001). For these families, getting into a good college is essential to a student's future success. That the culture puts a strong value on college education is evident in Korean immigrants' high education attainment. In 2015, 53% of Korean immigrants aged 25 and over had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 29% of the total United States foreign-born population and 31% of the native-born population (Zong & Batalova, 2017). Knowing Korean parents' high interest in college education, the researchers expect that they actively seek information during the college choice process of their children. In particular, maternal support for children's education in Korea has been well documented (Park, 2007). Considering Korean mothers' critical role in children's education, this study seeks to demonstrate what information Korean immigrant mothers need to know for their children's college preparation. Knowing what information they seek will help information professionals, educators, school library media specialists, and school

counselors to provide appropriate information services to user groups who are not familiar with the process of United States college preparation.

The purpose of this study is to understand Korean immigrant mothers' information needs for their high school children's college preparation through the analysis of an online forum for Korean women in the United States. This study will address the following specific research question: How can Korean immigrant mothers' information needs for their high school children's college preparation be characterized in terms of types of posts, topics, college preparation stages, and grades?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review will focus on two major aspects of this study: 1) a general overview of studies on mothers' participation in online forums and 2) studies on immigrant parents' involvement in college preparation and choice, and, related to this, the College Choice Model.

2.1. Parenting Online Forums

Many of the studies focusing on mothers' participation in online forums have focused on those with young children. For example, Evans, Donelle, and Hume-Loveland (2012) conducted a content analysis of messages in an online forum for mothers battling postpartum depression, finding that participants' postings gave emotional support—giving hope, honesty, and affection and empathy, as well as information—reassurance and validation, peer expertise, medical advice, and instrumental support, such as help with daily activities. Porter and Ispa (2013) found through an ethnographic study of messages posted by mothers of children under two on the websites of two best-selling parenting magazines in the United States that mothers had many questions about their children's sleeping and eating habits. The authors also highlighted themes in the posts, such as parenting stress, questions about advice given by others, and concerns over their children's development.

Overall, these studies and others point to several factors as reasons for mothers participating in parenting-oriented online forums. Valtchanov, Parry, Glover, and Mulcahy (2014) found that “[t]he distinctive ease, convenience, and speed of online connectivity, combined with the respectfulness cultivated within this particular online community, facilitated mothers' access to essential peer support in the forms of emotional sustenance, ‘appraisal assistance,’ and informational resources” (p. 187). Drentea

and Moren-Cross (2005) found three main types of communication present in their study of a motherhood parenting board—emotional support, instrumental support, and community building/protection (also highlighted in the Evans et al. article). One literature review of international research on parents' participation in online forums found that anonymity and availability are two central factors for why parents participate (Doty & Dworkin, 2014). Other websites seem to be more of a space for venting frustrations or otherwise engaging in anonymity by saying things one would not say in real life—the YouBeMom message board studied by Schoenebeck (2013) is one example.

Other research has examined the potential effects of income, age, education, and comfort on participation. Doty, Dworkin, and Connell (2012) surveyed 1,518 parents about their online activities and found that although income had a slight impact on information seeking behaviors, the factor with the most impact on information seeking and online activities was the participant's comfort with technology. Age and education had no effects. However, there has been less study of mothers of older children participating in online forums, as well as the potential differences that the immigrant experience might make to both participation in and needs of online forums. Our study aims to address some of these gaps.

2.2. Immigrant Parents' Involvement in College Preparation and Choice

The process of high school students' college choice is complicated, but academic studies have attempted to explain the various stages. One example is Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model. This model consists of three phases—predisposition, search, and choice. The predisposition phase is where students make a decision whether they would like to attend a college. The search phase is the second phase where students begin seeking information about colleges. The final phase is that of choice where students decide which college to attempt to attend. During this phase, students' families decide to accept any offers and apply for FA. This model has been tested with Asian Pacific Americans with findings that show

the college decision-making processes varied by the ethnic and socioeconomic class backgrounds of students. This general finding was true among such specific factors as the influence of social networks, the impact of cost and FA availability, numbers of college applications submitted, and perceptions of the prestige and reputation of different colleges (Teranishi et al., 2004, p. 546).

This study demonstrates the multiple "inputs" into the college decision making process, including socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and social characteristics.

Litten (1982)'s five-stage model is another example. This model is composed of college aspirations, decision to start process, information gathering, applications and enrollment, and identified college actions (admit/deny and FA) between the applications and enrollment stages. For each stage, they also identified influencing factors such as background (race, income, socioeconomic status, parents' education), personal attributes (academic ability, self-image), environment, high school attributes, student performance, public policy (FA), college actions (recruitment, activities, academic/admission policies), and college characteristics. The College Choice Model, whether it is a three-stage or a five-stage model, is an important first step in determining the various points at which immigrant parents have information needs in the college choice process.

The literature on college preparation and choice is clear that the role of the college applicant's support network is powerful. For example, Ma and Yeh (2010) studied 265 Chinese immigrants at a New York high school and found that "career-related support from parents" (along with other factors) positively predicted the youths' plans to attend college. Carolan-Silva and Reyes (2013) found in their study of first-generation Latino high school students that "parents influenced their children's aspirations indirectly through the values and qualities they modeled for their children, and directly through communicating their desire for them to attend college" (p. 341). Cabrera and La Nasa (2000) found that "[b]arriers to college access and completion occur along the K-16 pipeline when students are not supported in their development of college aspirations; their enrollment in college-bound classes; their access to sufficient information about college; and their completion of the necessary applications to enroll in college and receive financial aid" (cited in Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013, p. 335).

There have been some studies about parents' information needs with regard to their children's preparation for and choice of higher education, particularly in Latino communities. In 2002, Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee conducted a phone survey of over 1,000 Latino parents in three major United States cities, as well as follow-up interviews with 41 of these parents and found that these parents' knowledge of college was low, with over 60% of the parents missing more than half of the eight informational questions, ranging from topics about tuition and fees of different types of schools to when students should begin college preparation courses. At the same time, almost all of the parents expected

their children to attend college, so clearly there is a need for education. Fann, McClafferty Jarsky, and McDonough (2009) conducted an action study wherein Spanish-language workshops were held with Latino parents on college knowledge. They found that parents were generally looking for information on FA, general information on the system of higher education, application processes, academic requirements, and tests. Researchers found that these immigrant parents differed from many native parents, as they had little prior knowledge of the formal higher education structure.

Less is known about Korean-American communities. As mentioned in the introduction, parents of Asian American students place a heavy emphasis on education, often engaging their children in “shadow education,” such as SAT preparation tests and other tutoring (Byun & Park, 2012), suggesting a high amount of interest in higher education and a need for information about the college application process. Our study aims to address these gaps in knowledge.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a content analysis of messages posted to a “motherhood” forum on the MissyUSA website. MissyUSA is one of the largest online communities among Korean immigrants in the United States, which was launched in 2002. The members of the site are married Korean women living in America and they seek and share information about their lives in their adopted country. The site contains many forums for discussion on various topics. On the forums, the members of the site can post messages or reply to posted messages.

The Motherhood forum is divided into three categories—Pregnancy, Baby, and Schooling, the last of which has six subgroups—Daycare and Preschool, Kinder and Elementary school, Middle and High school, College Admissions, College and Graduate school, and Advertisements. The College Admissions subgroup forum is for sharing questions and information on college preparation and application. Since this study attempts to determine Korean mothers’ information needs regarding their high school students’ college preparation processes, messages from the College Admissions forum were analyzed. The number of posts posted in the College Admissions forum from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017 was 8,319. Out of these 8,319 posts, every 10th post was collected. After discarding 84 posts as they were unfit for analysis (e.g., posts without messages, advertisements, posts not related to college preparation,

etc.), a total of 747 posts were analyzed by two of the authors. For posts that had multiple queries, each query was treated as a separate post, so in total, 754 posts were analyzed.

The collected data were coded in four areas: grade, stage, type of post, and topic of post. First, grade was determined based on a student’s current grade, if it was identifiable in the post or if it could be directly inferred from the post. For example, if a mother asked when a specific college’s admission results were released, it was inferred that her child was a high school senior. Second, a coding scheme for stage was determined as Preparation, Information gathering, Application, Admission/Acceptance, and Enrollment. The authors defined a preliminary scheme for stages based on previous studies on college models (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982), and the five stages were finalized by reflecting unique characteristics of the current dataset. Third, regarding type of post, a previous study (Kim & Yoon, 2012) that conducted content analysis of online forums was considered to establish the precoding scheme, and the scheme was revised based on the unique characteristics of the current dataset. Fourth, due to lack of previous studies in this area, the topic of post coding scheme was developed in vivo and refined several times throughout an iterative coding process. Two of the authors coded 10% of the randomly selected posts and established precoding schemes. Then they coded another 10% of the randomly selected posts using the precoding schemes, and necessary revisions were made to the precoding schemes. The two authors next coded another 10% of the randomly selected posts each, and the percentages of agreement were calculated to check intercoder reliability. Using Holsti’s (1969) reliability formula, the percentage of intercoder agreement was 88% on average (grade 89%; stage 87%; type of posting 89%; topic of posting 88%). The final coding system is as follows:

- Grade
 - Middle schooler
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Not specific
- Stage:
 - Preparation: a stage in which students prepare themselves through high school academic performance and extracurricular activities
 - Information gathering: a stage in which students gather

- information for their college choice and application process
- Application: a stage in which college application and related documents are prepared and submitted
 - Admission/Acceptance: a stage in which students get admission results, decide where they want to go, and accept an offer from a college
 - Enrollment: a stage after making the decision about which college to attend in which students work on related paperwork and prepare for their college life
 - Uncertain: a stage cannot be clearly identified from a post
- Type of post:
 - Seeking information: posts seeking factual and objective information
 - Asking opinions: posts asking for advice, opinions, and subjective information
 - Sharing information: posts sharing factual and objective information
 - Sharing experiences: posts sharing personal experiences
 - Sharing emotions: posts mainly expressing emotions and feelings
 - Topic of post:
 - High school academic performance: posts related to high schoolers' academic performance
 - High school curriculum: posts related to high school curricula, including Advanced Placement (AP) courses and the International Baccalaureate (IB) program
 - High school extracurricular and camps: posts related to extracurricular and other activities, including camps not hosted by a college (camps hosted by a college fall under the 'campus visits' category)
 - Standardized tests: posts related to standardized tests such as Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), Preliminary SAT (PSAT) and American College Test (ACT). This category includes posts about comparison of different tests, test preparation, and test-taking process.
 - Other high school academic related: posts related to high school academics but not categorized in the above categories, such as posts related to high school academic environments and finding tutors
 - Specific college information: posts related to a specific college, including educational or living environment of the college, information about a certain program, qualifications needed for entrance, and so on. When a post asks about what SAT scores are needed to get admitted into a college, the post is categorized in 'specific college information,' not 'standardized tests.'
 - General college information: posts related to college in general, including college rankings and asking about college recommendations
 - Major and future career: posts asking about/sharing information regarding majors or future careers. Posts requesting college recommendation for a specific major fall under the 'general college information' category.
 - College expenses/FA: posts related to college expenses (tuition, living costs), FA, student loans, and scholarships
 - FA application: posts related to FA application forms and the FA process
 - College application: posts related to college application forms, the college application process, and preparing application documents, including recommendation letters and essays
 - College admission results: posts asking about/sharing college admission results and related information (e.g., notifying dates)
 - Accept decision and process: posts related to deciding to attend and accepting a college's admission offer and the acceptance process
 - College visits: posts related to college campus visits, including summer camps for high schoolers and college orientations
 - College life preparation: posts related to college life preparation after deciding on a college. Posts related to preparation for a specific college fall under the 'specific college information' category.
 - Immigration status: posts related to any issues caused by immigration status. When a post has two topics (e.g., immigration status and FA application), the post is categorized in the 'immigration status' category.
 - Others: posts that do not fit into the above categories

4. RESULTS

4.1. Topics and Types of Posts

As shown in Table 1, the most frequently posted topics were: specific college information (15%), standardized tests (13%), college application forms and processes (11%), college admission results (10%), college expenses and FA (8%), and general college information (8%). Some examples of posts in the most popular topic category, 'specific college information,' are "Please tell me about Brandeis University. I can't find much information about that university"; "If your kid got admitted into UVA, please share his/her grades,

test scores, and extracurricular activities. My son's wish is attending UVA"; "Do you know about the pre-med school at the University of Richmond?"

Regarding the type of posts, the number of posts asking for advice and opinions accounted for 57%, while 31% of posts asked for factual or objective information. Only a small portion of the posts intended to share information (5.8%), personal experiences (3.3%), or emotions (2.9%).

Several relations between topics and post types were observed. Questions seeking others' advice and opinions were related to various topics, including high school academic performance (e.g., What can be done if a junior student has a low GPA?), curriculum (e.g., Which class should be selected between AP Biology and AP Chemistry?), extracurricular activities (e.g., Would it be useful to participate in a specific extracurricular activity for college admission?), standardized tests (e.g., Are there disadvantages if a student takes SAT multiple times?), specific college information (e.g., How is the living environment of a certain college?), general college information (e.g., Which colleges would admit a student with certain standardized test scores?), major/future career (e.g., Which major would be best for a certain future

career?), accept decision process (e.g., How can I deposit money to the college?), and campus life preparation (e.g., How should I prepare bedding for my child going to a cold area?).

Questions containing requests for factual and objective information were often found in topics such as standardized tests (e.g., How long does it take to get ACT scores back?), FA application process (e.g., What should be recorded in a specific field in the FAFSA form?), college application process (e.g., How should students report AP exam scores?), college admission results (e.g., Where can I find admission results for a specific college?), accept decision process (e.g., How can students deny an acceptance offer from a college that they do not want to attend?), and immigrant status (e.g., How can a student indicate their immigration status if he/she is pending in the permanent resident process?).

The most frequently shared information was general college information, such as college rankings. The mothers shared personal experiences and emotions when discussing college admission results—for example, they shared the specs of a student who was admitted to a specific college and shared their emotions after they learned their child had been admitted.

Table 1. Number of posts by topic and type of posts

	Seeking information	Asking opinion	Sharing information	Sharing experience	Sharing emotion	Total
HS academic performance	3	18	4	-	-	25 (3.3%)
HS curriculum	8	37	-	1	-	46 (6.1%)
HS extracurricular and camps	4	17	1	-	1	23 (3.1%)
Standard tests	35	60	1	-	2	98 (13.0%)
Other HS academic related	2	10	1	-	-	13 (1.7%)
Specific college information	18	92	4	1	-	115 (15.3%)
General college information	5	41	12	1	1	60 (8.0%)
Major & future career	-	17	5	1	1	24 (3.2%)
College expenses/FA	27	27	4	1	2	61 (8.1%)
FA application	26	16	-	-	-	42 (5.6%)
College application	37	37	2	3	2	81 (10.7%)
College admission results	38	12	6	15	7	78 (10.3%)
Accept decision & process	12	16	-	2	3	33 (4.4%)
College visits	7	10	-	-	-	17 (2.3%)
Campus life preparation	5	10	1	-	-	16 (2.1%)
Immigration status	6	3	2	-	-	11 (1.5%)
Others	1	6	1	-	3	11 (1.5%)
Total	234 (31%)	429 (56.8%)	44 (5.8%)	25 (3.3%)	22 (2.9%)	(100%)

HS, high school; FA, financial aid.

4.2. College Preparation Stages and College Information Needs

In terms of stages, the posts were relatively evenly distributed, although the preparation (26%) stage garnered the most posts by a few percentage points, followed by the admission/acceptance stage (23%), the information gathering stage (21%), and the application stage (20%) (Table 2). The patterns between topics and stages were obvious. In the preparation stage, posts regarding high school academic performance, curriculum, extracurricular activities, and standardized tests were frequent. Particularly, the ratio of standardized test related posts was notably high: 44% of posts in the preparation stage were in this category. During the information gathering stage, specific college information, general college information, major recommendation, and college expenses and FA were the main topics mentioned in the posts. In the application stage, questions on colleges as well as FA application forms and processes were often asked. During the stage when students are admitted and decide on what college to attend, questions on specific college information, college expenses and FA information, admission results, and acceptance decision and process were

frequently posted. After students had decided on a college to attend (enrollment stage), questions on specific college and campus life preparations were often posted. Posts related to college expenses and FA and posts related to specific college appeared throughout the stages from information gathering and enrollment. Whereas college models include a predisposition stage (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000) or college aspiration stage (Litten, 1982) in which aspirations for higher education are developed for high school students, the current dataset showed that Korean immigrant mothers who go to the online forum have already decided to have their children go to college. The appendix includes sample questions with the categories of topic, type of posts, and stage.

4.3. Grades and College Information Needs

As shown in Table 3, over a half of the questions were asked by parents whose children were seniors, followed by those whose children were juniors. Depending on a student's grade, topics of the questions varied. Mothers of freshmen high school students asked mainly about high school curricula, and mothers of sophomore high school students

Table 2. Number of posts by topic and stage

	Preparation	Information gathering	Application	Admission/ acceptance	Enrollment/ college life	Uncertain	Total
HS academic performance	21	4	-	-	-	-	25 (3.3%)
HS curriculum	40	3	-	2	-	1	46 (6.1%)
HS extracurricular and camps	22	-	-	1	-	-	23 (3.1%)
Standard tests	87	3	6	1	-	1	98 (13.0%)
Other HS academic related	11	2	-	-	-	-	13 (1.7%)
Specific college information	2	54	7	39	11	2	115 (15.3%)
General college information	3	51	1	2	-	3	60 (8.0%)
Major & future career	1	14	2	4	-	3	24 (3.2%)
College expenses/FA	-	11	21	17	7	5	61 (8.1%)
FA application	-	-	39	3	-	-	42 (5.6%)
College application	4	5	67	4	1	-	81 (10.7%)
College admission results	-	1	2	75	-	-	78 (10.3%)
Accept decision & process	-	-	2	24	5	2	33 (4.4%)
College visits	4	5	-	1	7	-	17 (2.3%)
Campus life preparation	-	3	-	-	12	1	16 (2.1%)
Immigration status	1	4	4	1	-	1	11 (1.5%)
Others	1	1	2	1	-	6	11 (1.5%)
Total	197 (26.1%)	161 (21.4%)	153 (20.3%)	175 (23.2%)	43 (5.7%)	25 (3.3%)	754 (100%)

HS, high school; FA, financial aid.

asked about standardized tests. Some questions on college information (specific/general) were also noticed. Mothers of junior high school students asked mostly about high school academic performance, curricula, and standardized tests. These mothers also looked for specific and general college information. Mothers of senior high school students

still asked about high school curricula and standardized tests, but they more actively gathered college information, application process information, and admission/accept process information. As Fig. 1 shows, the preparation stage starts as early as middle school, and information gathering for college stage starts in the sophomore year of high school.

Table 3. Number of posts by topic and grade

	Middle schooler	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Not specific	Total
HS academic performance	-	1	5	9	3	7	25 (3.3%)
HS curriculum	2	8	3	12	7	14	46 (6.1%)
HS extracurricular and camps	-	4	3	6	2	8	23 (3.1%)
Standard tests	2	2	12	28	18	36	98 (13.0%)
Other HS academic related	2	1	-	2	1	7	13 (1.7%)
Specific college information	-	-	2	11	72	30	115 (15.3%)
General college information	1	1	3	9	15	31	60 (8.0%)
Major & future career	-	-	1	2	6	15	24 (3.2%)
College expenses/FA	-	-	-	3	46	12	61 (8.1%)
FA application	-	-	-	2	37	3	42 (5.6%)
College application	-	-	1	2	68	10	81 (10.7%)
College admission results	-	-	-	-	75	3	78 (10.3%)
Accept decision & process	-	-	-	1	31	1	33 (4.4%)
College visits	-	1	2	2	11	1	17 (2.3%)
Campus life preparation	-	-	-	-	12	4	16 (2.1%)
Immigration status	-	-	-	1	6	4	11 (1.5%)
Others	-	-	-	-	3	8	11 (1.5%)
Total	7 (0.9%)	18 (2.4%)	32 (4.2%)	90 (11.9%)	413 (54.8%)	194 (25.7%)	754 (100%)

HS, high school; FA, financial aid.

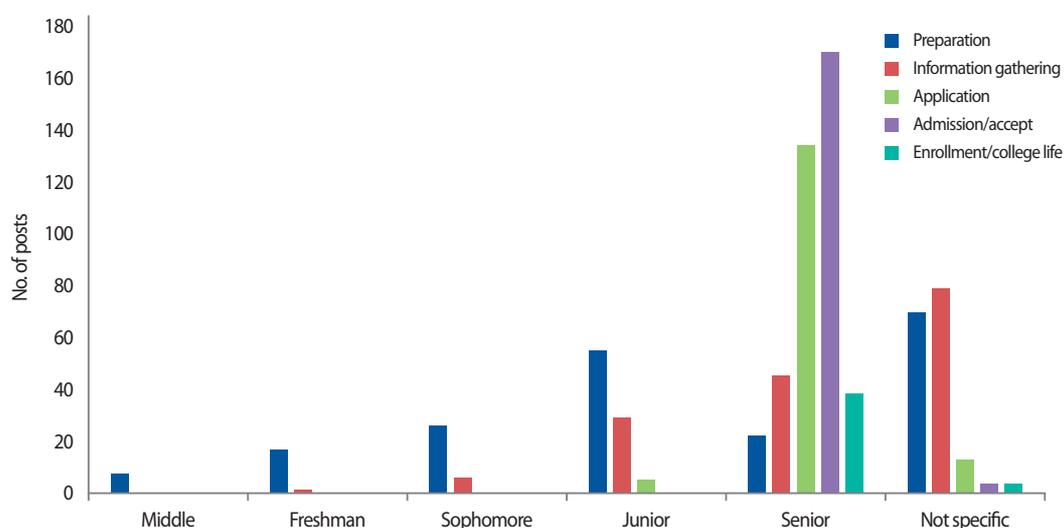


Fig. 1. Number of posts per grade by stage.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study highlight four key issues essential to understanding Korean immigrant mothers' information needs to assist their children along the path to college.

First, Korean immigrant mothers have a wide range of information needs from high school academics through the college application process to FA. At a glance, these information needs are common to any ethnic/racial groups of parents in the United States. On looking further, however, Korean immigrant mothers who are not familiar with the United States education system lack basic knowledge of United States colleges and the application procedures including FA. This finding supports earlier research indicating that information on the application process and FA are of utmost importance for Latino parents of first-generation students (Fann et al., 2009). Applying for FA is especially challenging for Korean immigrant mothers because of different procedures between Korea and the United States. In Korea, the FA application process begins after a student is fully accepted to college and the procedures are relatively simple. In the United States, the process is not only a parallel track of the college preparation process, but is very complicated. Those parents with limited English abilities face significant difficulties in acquiring and understanding the FAFSA, CSS, and other FA-related information. Therefore, Korean mothers, like other immigrant parents, are in need of a base knowledge of the overall college application process including the FA application process, as well as knowledge of the United States education system to help their children prepare for college.

Second, in addition to general information needs, immigrant community-specific information needs call for special attention. Among the most frequently sought information by Korean immigrant mothers was information on standardized tests such as the SAT. It is known that Asian parents put a strong emphasis on standardized tests and thus East Asian students including Koreans are more likely to take SAT test prep courses than White and Hispanic students (Byun & Park, 2012). Whether such emphasis is outsized to their importance is debatable, but what is certain is that Korean mothers are anxious to acquire substantial information about standardized tests from basics (e.g., how to cancel SAT scores) to more strategic guidance (e.g., choices of subjects in SAT2). Also, a large portion of the questions related to college information were towards science, engineering, and medical fields. This

finding confirms Kim's study (2014), which revealed that it is a norm for Korean immigrant parents to guide their children to science, engineering, and business fields as they are perceived to guarantee high payoff and job security. Other community-specific inquiries were concerned with visa/immigration status. These community-specific information needs reflect cultural values and concerns Korean immigrant mothers have and should be adequately addressed by counselors, teachers, and information professionals.

Third, although many online forums are used for emotional sharing, MissyUSA is used mainly for informative purposes for the topic of college preparation. In terms of type of information requested, almost 60% of the mothers sought advice while 30% looked for factual information. Advice-seeking questions are, for example, "What would be the best choices of courses for the 10th grader who hasn't decided on a major?"; "Which college would be better between Duke and Johns Hopkins for an 11th grade girl interested in the education or medical field?" These questions cannot be answered by college-planning resources that only provide generic information. MissyUSA is appealing because the mothers can receive customized advice/suggestion for an individual child anonymously. Furthermore, since Korean immigrant mothers lack English skills and confidence in interacting with teachers/counselors (Kao, 2014), they may prefer the online forum where they can easily communicate with their Korean peers who have common understandings.

Fourth, the questions in this study were almost evenly distributed across the college preparation stages. This implies that the mothers seek information constantly as their children go through the college-preparation process.

6. CONCLUSION

Through an exploration of posts on a popular online forum for Korean immigrant mothers, this study explored Korean immigrant mothers' information needs for their high school children's college preparation. By analyzing posts made over a one-year period, researchers found that many information needs, such as questions about the FA process, demonstrated similarities to those of other immigrant groups. At the same time, there were also community-specific themes that emerged, such as an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and standardized tests. The forum was mainly used for factual questions, not emotional support. Finally, there is clearly a

need for informal support networks, perhaps because of a lack of confidence in English skills and in interacting with teachers and counselors.

This study demonstrates that there are many ways that educators, counselors, and information professionals can better meet immigrant Korean mothers' information needs regarding their children's higher education admissions. The findings show that there are both general types of information that can be offered that will be useful to the general population of parents of high school-aged students, as well as customized types of information for this specific immigrant group. In general, parents need to know information on the details of the application process, particularly FA information. This is particularly important for parents who might not have gone through the process themselves, such as in the case of adult immigrants or parents who did not attend college. This also presupposes a knowledge of the higher education system in America, which, again, should not be assumed for those parents who have not been exposed to the system first-hand. Many immigrant groups, or parents with little exposure to the higher education system, may be nervous about speaking to educators about these issues, so outreach is critical. An emphasis on providing access for those with limited English language skills and those who are not used to interacting with information professionals is also important.

More specific to the Korean immigrant experience, this study shows that mothers would like community-specific information, such as issues that may arise around visas or immigration. Additionally, there are cultural factors that are important, such as a general emphasis on STEM and standardized tests, which could be used as means of entry to the community. If educators know that these mothers are already concerned about these specific issues, starting with those topics and then leading into other parts of the process about which they are less aware might work well.

Finally, the findings show that starting parental education when children are younger—as early as middle school—would be beneficial. The results demonstrate that there is a range of information needed at different stages in a child's education, confirming earlier studies on college application information-seeking processes. This is again an opportunity that would benefit not only this specific immigrant community, but all parents interested in helping their parents navigate the complicated college admissions process.

This study has limitations like other contents analysis studies of online community forums. Since this study examined the messages posted to a single online

community, although it is a major online community among Korean immigrant women, the results may not represent the entire Korean immigrant population. In future studies, it will be critical to conduct further investigations on Korean immigrant parents' needs and barriers through interviews to get a better understanding of what type of information they are seeking outside of online forums—and why they choose various venues for pursuing this information. It would also be beneficial to understand where emotional support is coming from, given the emphasis on factual information-seeking that was present in the online discussions. Additionally, exploring other immigrant groups, particularly for the groups who have lower college attendance, would be a useful point of comparison. This would aid researchers in creating a general understanding of immigrant information needs for the college application process and how information professionals and educators could combine the needs of different groups to create services that are better able to reach all those who need this type of information.

REFERENCES

- Byun, S. Y., & Park, H. (2012). The academic success of East Asian American youth: The role of shadow education. *Sociology of Education*, 85(1), 40-60.
- Cabrera, A. F., & La Nasa, S. M. (2000). Three critical tasks America's disadvantaged face on their path to college. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2000(107), 23-29.
- Carolan-Silva, A., & Reyes, J. R. (2013). Navigating the path to college: Latino students' social networks and access to college. *Educational Studies*, 49(4), 334-359.
- Ceja, M. (2006). Understanding the role of parents and siblings as information sources in the college choice process of Chicana students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 47(1), 87-104.
- Chapman, D. W. (1981). A model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 52(5), 490-505.
- Choi, S., Cranley, M. E., & Nichols, J. D. (2001). Coming to America, becoming American: Narration of Korean immigrant young men. *International Education Journal*, 2(5), 47-60.
- Doty, J. L., & Dworkin, J. (2014). Online social support for parents: A critical review. *Marriage & Family Review*, 50(2), 174-198.
- Doty, J. L., Dworkin, J., & Connell, J. H. (2012). Examining

- digital differences: Parents' online activities. *Family Science Review*, 17(2), 18-39.
- Drentea, P., & Moren-Cross, J. L. (2005). Social capital and social support on the web: The case of an Internet mother site. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 27(7), 920-943.
- Evans, M., Donelle, L., & Hume-Loveland, L. (2012). Social support and online postpartum depression discussion groups: A content analysis. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 87(3), 405-410.
- Fann, A., McClafferty Jarsky, K., & McDonough, P. M. (2009). Parent involvement in the college planning process: A case study of P-20 collaboration. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 8(4), 374-393.
- Holsti, O. R. (1969). *Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.
- Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). Studying student college choice: A three-phase model and the implications for policymakers. *College and University*, 62(3), 207-221.
- Kao, G. (2014). Parental influences on the educational outcomes of immigrant youth. *International Migration Review*, 38(2), 427-449.
- Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1998). Educational aspirations of minority youth. *American Journal of Education*, 106(3), 349-384.
- Kim, E. (2014). When social class meets ethnicity: College-going experiences of Chinese and Korean immigrant students. *The Review of Higher Education*, 37(3), 321-348.
- Kim, S., & Yoon, J. (2012). The use of an online forum for health information by married Korean women in the United States. *Information Research*, 17(2), 1-18.
- Litten, L. H. (1982). Different strokes in the applicant pool: Some refinements in a model of student college choice. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 53(4), 383-402.
- Ma, P.-W. W., & Yeh, C. J. (2010). Individual and familial factors influencing the educational and career plans of Chinese immigrant youths. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 58(3), 230-245.
- Park, S. J. (2007). Educational manager mothers: South Korea's neoliberal transformation. *Korea Journal*, 47(3), 186-213.
- Porter, N., & Ispa, J. M. (2013). Mothers' online message board questions about parenting infants and toddlers. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 69(3), 559-568.
- Schoenebeck, S. Y. (2013). The secret life of online moms: Anonymity and disinhibition on YouBeMom.com. *Proceedings of the seventh international AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* (pp. 555-562). Palo Alto: The AAAI Press.
- Teranishi, R. T., Ceja, M., Antonio, A. L., Allen, W. R., & McDonough, P. M. (2004). The college-choice process for Asian Pacific Americans: Ethnicity and socioeconomic class in context. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(4), 527-551.
- Tornatzky, L.G., Cutler, R., & Lee, J. (2002). *College knowledge: What Latino parents need to know and why they don't know it*. Retrieved September 20, 2018 from http://trpi.org/wp-content/uploads/archives/College_Knowledge.pdf.
- Valtchanov, B. L., Parry, D. C., Glover, T. D., & Mulcahy, C. M. (2014). Neighborhood at your fingertips: Transforming community online through a Canadian social networking site for mothers. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 18(2), 187-217.
- Zong, J., & Batalova, J. (2017). *Korean immigrants in the United States*. Retrieved September 20, 2018 from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/korean-immigrants-united-states>.