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Social Welfare Policy for Marriage Migrants and Their Families in the Republic of Korea

Kebijakan Kesejahteraan Sosial bagi Migran yang Menikah dan Keluarganya di Republik Korea

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Abstract: To ensure the safe settlement of marriage migrants and their families within the Republic of Korea's distinct multicultural context, it is essential to adopt both a rights-based and universal welfare approach to foster genuine inclusion. However, the current social welfare policy for marriage migrants and their families presents a social investment and labelling approach, revealing its difficulties and paradoxical impact toward their full inclusion. This study examines the social welfare policy for marriage migrants and their families, to identify and analyze the functional gaps and unintended consequences in existing welfare policies and advocate for a shift away from a labelling approach toward more inclusive and rights-based policies that support stable settlement. Through an extensive desk review of relevant research, legislation, government surveys, and policy audit reports concerning Korea's Multicultural Family Policy, this study presents recommendations for policy revision in response to the challenges embedded within the current framework. Rather than focusing solely on the expansion of services, the findings underscore the importance of enhancing service quality and implementation processes while addressing structural forms of discrimination. The study further advocates for a rights-based approach to welfare provision, moving away from selective, group-specific targeting and discretionary or charitable measures.

Abstrak: *Dalam rangka memastikan perkawinan yang aman bagi migran yang menikah dan keluarganya dalam konteks multikulturalisme yang khas di Republik Korea, diperlukan pendekatan kesejahteraan berbasis hak dan bersifat universal guna mendorong inklusi yang sejati. Namun, kebijakan kesejahteraan sosial bagi migran yang menikah dan keluarga mereka saat ini justru menghadirkan pendekatan investasi sosial dengan metode pelabelan pelabelan, yang menimbulkan berbagai kesulitan serta dampak yang berlawanan terhadap inklusi penuh. Studi ini mengkaji kebijakan kesejahteraan sosial bagi migran yang menikah dan keluarganya, untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis kesenjangan fungsional dan konsekuensi yang tidak diinginkan dalam kebijakan yang ada, serta mendorong pergeseran dari pendekatan pelabelan menuju kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan berbasis hak yang mendukung pernikahan yang stabil. Melalui tinjauan pustaka yang ekstensif terhadap penelitian, peraturan perundang-undangan, survei pemerintah, dan laporan audit kebijakan yang relevan mengenai Kebijakan Keluarga Multikultural Korea, studi ini menyajikan rekomendasi revisi kebijakan sebagai respons terhadap tantangan yang terdapat dalam kerangka kerja saat ini. Alih-alih hanya berfokus pada perluasan layanan, temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya peningkatan kualitas layanan dan proses implementasi sekaligus mengatasi bentuk-bentuk diskriminasi struktural. Studi ini lebih lanjut mengadvokasi pendekatan berbasis hak dalam penyediaan kesejahteraan, dengan meninggalkan praktik yang selektif, menargetkan kelompok tertentu, serta bersifat diskresif atau karitatif.*

Keywords:
marriage migration; social welfare policy; social inclusion; multicultural families

Kata Kunci:
migrasi perkawinan; kebijakan kesejahteraan sosial; inklusi sosial; keluarga multikultural

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1. Introduction

In 2022, the Republic of Korea (Korea) experienced a total fertility rate of 0.788, indicative of a significant demographic challenge. In this context, immigration discussions have been accelerated, even amid prevalent apprehension and sensitivity toward migrant populations. As of the end of 2022, the number of foreign residents in Korea stood at 2,245,912, marking a notable increase of 14.8 per cent compared to the previous year.[1] This upward trend in the foreign resident population has been observed steadily over the years, except for the period during the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the socio-economic factors such as declining birth rates and labor force shortages, it is inevitable for the Korean government to receive more migrants, to address challenges from the population decline, in the foreign resident population in the near future.

Among the diverse types of migration patterns to Korea, one type of migration that has attracted the most social attention is marriage migration. Marriage migrants in Korea encounter numerous challenges throughout their migration and settlement journey, and these difficulties extend to and impact the families formed in the course of their migration. Marriage migrants, particularly those who are women from developing countries, encounter multi-faceted discrimination that exacerbates their struggle for inclusion and equitable treatment.[2] These challenges include limited financial resources, discriminatory work environments, barriers to addressing domestic violence, difficulties in registering their children's births when returning to their home country, and possible exposure to trafficking risk in the international marriage brokerage process.

Recognizing the issue and anticipating that marriage migrants and their children would have a lasting socio-cultural impact as members of Korean society,[3] the Korean government began establishing a legal and policy framework to support marriage migrants and their families in the mid-2000s.[4] As part of this effort, protective measures were developed within a social welfare framework known as the Multicultural Family Policy (MFP), overseen by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF). The MFP serves as the primary welfare policy aimed at promoting the inclusion of marriage migrants and their families. This reflects a concerted governmental effort to respond to the complex challenges faced by marriage migrants and their families.

However, despite these advancements, clear limitations remain in the functionality of the policy, particularly regarding its effectiveness and the emergence of unintended negative consequences. With nearly two decades having passed since the active implementation of the MFP, it is now essential to critically assess the extent to which these policies have bridged the gap between their intended goals and actual outcomes. As the population with a migration background continues to grow, timely and proactive discussions about their stable settlement and social inclusion have become increasingly urgent. The objectives of this research are: (1) to evaluate an existing welfare policy for marriage migrants and their families; and (2) to advocate for a shift away from labelling methods toward more inclusive and rights-based policies that support stable settlement.

This study differs from previous research that has largely focused on evaluating the effectiveness of individual programs within different sectors of the MFP, typically analyzing specific initiatives in detail. Instead, it adopts a broader scope to examine unintended policy impact and the functionality of this policy framework for marriage migrants and their families. By doing so, it highlights institutional challenges, policy blind spots, and implementation gaps that are often overlooked. This approach enables a more comprehensive understanding of how this policy can function within the larger structural context in Korean society.

The analysis begins by outlining the background of marriage migration in Korea and presenting an overview of marriage migrants and their families, who are officially categorized as multicultural families under MFP framework. It then examines the legal and policy framework established by the Korean government. The study critically investigates the unintended negative consequences of these policies and the gaps in their implementation, highlighting the disconnect between stated objectives and actual outcomes. Based on these findings, the study offers policy recommendations aimed to advance the rights and inclusion of marriage migrants and their families in Korean society.

2. Method

The policy analysis was conducted over four months from March to June 2024. The analysis began with an in-depth desk review of relevant laws and policy documents to describe the MFP framework. Additionally,

1 MOJ, "Status of short- and long-term foreign residents by year."
2 Kim and Lee, "Levels of Perceived Discrimination among Marriage Migrants and Policy Implications."
3 Baek and Shim, "A Study on the Use of Multicultural Terminology."
4 Song, "A Study on the Policy Making Process of the Multicultural Families Support Act - Focusing on the Policy Network Analysis."

various policy-related documents, including statistical data sheets, policy audit reports, fact-finding surveys by the government, and surveys conducted by civil society organizations, were used to assess the extent to which existing policies address key issues faced by marriage migrants and their families and their gaps. Furthermore, a wide range of prior studies conducted to evaluate the relevant policy were reviewed.

For the analysis of relevant legislation, translated texts provided by the Korea Law Translation Center were utilized to ensure accuracy and consistency. However, due to the unavailability of policy documents in English, the researcher independently translated these materials from the original language to ensure their inclusion in the study. Overall, this wide range of document reviews ensured a thorough and nuanced understanding of the policy landscape and its implementation for marriage migrants and their families.

While a comprehensive analysis of marriage migration should address interconnected issues such as socio-economic and immigration policies, the regulation of international marriage brokerage, and resettlement support for returnees and their children, this study focuses solely on social welfare policy and the institutional challenges and impacts in Korea. Future research should expand the scope to include a broader examination of migration pathways and the responsibilities of both origin and destination countries. Additionally, it should explore individual and community-level dynamics, including challenges such as power imbalances within families and community-specific cultural characteristics of this population.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Marriage migrants in the Republic of Korea

The complex effect of economic, sociological factors, and demographic gender imbalances in certain areas influences one's decision on cross-border marriage.[5] Since the 1990s, Korea has experienced a significant influx of marriage migrants. While economic motivations largely shaped the decision to migrate through marriage with Korean men for women from the developing countries, the main driving force in Korea was the marriage shortage faced by rural men. This shortage stemmed from a rural exodus of women seeking better opportunities in urban areas, making it increasingly difficult for men in farming communities to find spouses.

As marriage was strongly emphasized as a societal expectation in the past in Korean society, remaining single was often viewed as taboo. As a result, international marriage brokerage agencies (IMBAs) began targeting rural single men, arranging marriages between them and women from developing countries. Furthermore, the usage of IMBAs was even promoted by the Korean government under the policy slogan "Make rural bachelors get married", as this international marriage began to be viewed as a potential solution for the marriage shortage in rural areas in the late 1990s. Under the policy slogan, a number of local authorities enacted subsidy policies as municipal ordinances, promoting the utilization of IMBAs.[6] The subsidy policy for the users of IMBA led to an increase in demand for international marriage and the number of IMBAs, resulting in a dramatic increase in marriage migrants from 2006.

However, the hasty promotion of international marriage through IMBAs without proper readiness on marriage migration brought various problems in the entire migration process from the pre-departure phase to settlement and even the resettlement phase, tangled with human rights issues such as inhuman match making process, disinformation of husbands' criminal history, disease, occupation, and income. In addition, families' pressure on marriage migrants to perform traditional gender roles and cultural and social exclusion of children from the multicultural families and marriage migrants were commonly observed.[7] Additionally, as the worst cases, severe domestic violence against women marriage migrants have been frequently reported in the Korean media, including the death of the Vietnamese wife, Huan Mai, who was killed by her husband.[8]

Acknowledging the challenges and risks arising from the surge in international marriages between Korean husbands and foreign wives from developing countries in the region, the government formally includes marriage migrants in the legal and policy framework to provide diverse social services that reflect the needs of marriage migrants. The first law that included the definition of marriage migrants is the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea, adopted in 2007. Paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the Act, specifically,

5 Raymo and Iwasawa, "Marriage Market Mismatches in Japan: An Alternative View of the Relationship between Women's Education and Marriage."

6 Kwan and Kang, "The Study on Human Right Protection and the Process of Marriage Brokers Business Management for Migrant Women via International Marriage in Asia."

7 Wijerathna and Hewapathirana, "Hidden stories behind global love: Acculturative and social integration challenges of marriage migrant women in South Korea."

8 Im, "The cruel story of migrant women who were beaten to death and fell to their deaths."

defines "immigrants through marriage" as any foreigner residing in the Republic of Korea who had or has a marital relationship with a Korean national.

This definition emphasizes that regardless of their present marital status or nationality, individuals who have established a historical or ongoing marital relationship with a Korean citizen are classified as marriage migrants, thereby highlighting both the nature of their relationship and their residence within Korea. Notably, according to this legal definition, marriage migrants who obtain Korean nationality through marriage immigration policies or reside outside of Korea are excluded from the definition of marriage migrants.

As of the end of 2021, the total number of marriage migrants in Korea, including naturalized marriage migrants, was recorded at 385,512 individuals.[9] According to statistics produced by Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) in 2022,[10] women constitute a significant majority of the total marriage migrants in Korea, accounting for 80.3 per cent of the overall population of marriage migrants.[11] The majority of marriage migration flows to Korea come from Southeast Asia (37.4 per cent) and China (35.1 per cent), accounting for 72.5 per cent of the total population of marriage migrants residing in Korea.[12] Specifically, the per centage of female marriage migrants from Asia in each country is China (35.1 per cent), Vietnam (23.1 per cent), Japan (9.1 per cent), the Philippines (7.2 per cent), Thailand (4.4 per cent), the United States (2.8 per cent), Cambodia (2.7 per cent), and others (15.6 per cent).[13]

3.2 Multicultural families in the Republic of Korea

As of 2021, MOGEF estimated that the number of individuals residing in households categorized as multicultural families with the legal definition reached a total of 1.12 million people, representing approximately 2.2 per cent of the total population. To develop an academic understanding of marriage migrants and the concept of "multicultural" in Korea, it is essential to examine the concept of the "multicultural family" in the Korean society specific context, as it has a significantly different context from the one developed in the academic discourse of multiculturalism, which has been initially developed from western academia.

In the case of Korea, discourse on multicultural policy has primarily developed in response to social issues concerning marriage migrants, framed within the concept of the "multicultural family," which often refers to families consisting of a woman marriage migrant and a Korean husband, rather than through a broader engagement with cultural diversity arising from complex migration flows.[14] The close linkage between family and marriage migration has led to the rapid development of legal and policy frameworks, with marriage migration and following family issues positioned at the center of governmental strategies aimed at addressing social exclusion. As a result, public discourse around multicultural social issues or multiculturalism has largely focused on the provision of social welfare services specifically designed for marriage migrants and their families.

In 2004, the term "Damunhwa gajok," which translates to "multicultural family" in English, was introduced during a press conference by the Citizens' Alliance for Healthy Families to replace discriminatory terms like "mixed-blood" and "international marriage family" that were used to perceive as a family consisting of one Korean national and a foreigner.[15] The term multicultural family gained further official recognition after the government incorporated the term into education policies, including the Ministry of Education's "Multicultural Family Children's Education Support Plan 2006-2007" and the "Guidelines for Education of Students from Multicultural Families 2008."[16] In addition, the Multicultural Families Support Act (MFSA), enacted in 2008 as the inaugural legal framework for providing comprehensive support services to multicultural families for their stable settlement in society, marked the official introduction of the term "multicultural family." Since its enactment, the term has been widely and rapidly adopted in policy-related government documents, academic discourse, media, and everyday language.

The definitions of a multicultural family, as articulated in Article 1 of the MFSA, are as follows: (a) A family comprised of immigrants by marriage defined in subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act, and persons who have acquired nationality of the Republic of Korea pursuant to Articles 2 through 4 of the Nationality Act; (b) A family comprised of a person who has acquired nationality of the Republic of Korea pursuant to Articles 3 and 4 of the Nationality Act and a person who has acquired nationality of the Republic of Korea pursuant to

9 MOGEF, *The 4th Master Plan for Multicultural Family Policy*.
10 KOSTAT, "Total birth rate."
11 KOSTAT, "Status of residence of marriage immigrants by nationality (gender)."
12 KOSTAT, "Status of residence of marriage immigrants by nationality (gender)."
13 KOSTAT, "Status of residence of marriage immigrants by nationality (gender)."
14 H. J. H.J., "The Segmentation of Korean Immigration Discourse."
15 Im, "Citizens' Alliance for Healthy Families Announces Terms for Healthy Families."
16 Baek and Shim, "A Study on the Use of Multicultural Terminology."

Articles 2 through 4 of the aforementioned Act. Following the definition of the MFSA stated in paragraph (a) of Article 1, a multicultural family is a family comprised of "marriage migrants", which is defined in subparagraph 3 of Article 2 of the Framework Act, as one of the family members. At the same time, paragraph (b) of Article 1 extends this definition to include families comprised of naturalized citizens, as outlined in Articles 2 through 4 of the Nationality Act. This condition ensures that the term "multicultural family" can include households formed with naturalized marriage migrants.

While the legal definition provides a strong legal foundation for implementing welfare services policy for this group, outlining the scope of multicultural families, in practice, the term is socially and politically used to concretely target families comprised of women marriage migrants and Korean nationals. At the same time, this usage restricts the scope of the term to this specific group, such as migrant workers, North Korean defectors, and other foreign residents without Korean spouses. Moreover, although the legal definition does not specify gender, societal perceptions of multicultural families often predominantly center around the image of a Korean husband and a marriage migrant wife, particularly from China and Southeast Asia. This perception reflects the empirical sex ratio of marriage migrants, characterized by highly feminized migration flows, and is shaped by existing prejudices associated with international marriage practices.[17]

3.3 Multicultural Families Support Act

Korea's comprehensive social welfare service policy for marriage migrants and their families is primarily grounded in two key legal instruments. At its core is the Multicultural Families Support Act (MFSA), which outlines the fundamental objectives and provisions for supporting members of multicultural families. To ensure the effective implementation of the MFSA, and the Enforcement Decree of the Multicultural Families Support Act, which specifies the practical measures and delegated details necessary for implementing the Act. These legal instruments form the basis for the government's wide range of support services targeting the unique needs of multicultural families, including marriage migrants in Korea.

The legislation process for the MFSA was significantly influenced by the political and administrative changes following the election of President Roh Moo-hyun in 2002. The new administration marked a shift in government migration policy from a focus on labor migration discourse to multiculturalism discourse. Subsequently, various migration-related policies were implemented in line with this new multicultural policy approach. In June 2004, the Ministry of Gender Equality took over childcare and family affairs from the Ministry of Health and Welfare and was reorganized into the MOGEF in 2005. Since then, the MOGEF has approached issues faced by female marriage migrants as family issues. The reorganization of the executive branch following the administration's inauguration had a significant impact on the development of the MFSA.[18]

In 2006, the government established and promoted the "Social Integration Support Measures for Families of Female Marriage Migrants" through national policy meetings.[19] Building on these policy developments, the government moved toward a legal framework to address the growing malpractices of marriage migration brokerage and human rights violations against women marriage migrants. As a result, in 2007, the Marriage Brokers Business Management Act was enacted to regulate international marriage brokers and prevent damage to users. That same year, the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea was legislated to aid migrant integration and promote mutual understanding and respect between Korean nationals and foreigners.

Amid these legislative efforts, the MOGEF, together with the National Assembly Human Rights Policy Research Association, spearheaded the push for the Multicultural Families Support Act, which would provide the legal basis for the Multicultural Family Policy (MFP). During the drafting process, institutional tensions emerged with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), the agency traditionally responsible for foreigner-related policy. The final version of the MFSA reflected a series of strategic compromises shaped by the political interests of both ministries. In 2008, after a protracted negotiation and adoption process, the MFSA was officially enacted to formalize and institutionalize comprehensive support measures for marriage migrants and multicultural families and to serve as the legal foundation for the MFP.[20]

Article 1 of the MFSA states its purpose as "to help multicultural family members enjoy a stable family life and fulfil roles and responsibilities as members of society, and therefore, contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of multicultural family members and their integration into society." The MFSA specifically outlines

17 Park and Stephen, *Is South Korea Ready for Multicultural Families? An Analysis of Social Media*.
18 Song, "A Study on the Policy Making Process of the Multicultural Families Support Act - Focusing on the Policy Network Analysis."
19 Seo, "Evolving Multicultural Societies and Social Welfare."
20 Song, "A Study on the Policy Making Process of the Multicultural Families Support Act - Focusing on the Policy Network Analysis."

the government's role in developing and implementing the MFP. Paragraph 1 of Article 3-2, "The Minister of Gender Equality and Family shall establish a master plan for policies on multicultural families every five years to support multicultural families.", mandates the responsibility of the MOGEF to develop a comprehensive five-year master plan for the MFP. Additionally, paragraph 3 of Article 3-3, The Minister of Gender Equality and Family, the heads of relevant central administrative agencies, and the Mayors/Provincial Governors shall establish and execute each year an implementation plan for multicultural family policies", states to establish and execute the implementation plans of the MFP by obligating both central and local governors to establish and execute annual implementation plans for the MFP each year.

The Act also outlines concrete policy measures and services to support multicultural families in everyday life. Articles 6 to 11 and 11-1 of the Act specify multidimensional provisions, including the provision of everyday life information and educational support; measures for maintaining equality in familial relationships; protection of and support for victims of domestic violence; medical and health support; care and education for children and juveniles; and the provision of multilingual services. Additionally, Article 11-2 imposes the obligation to establish and operate a General Information Call Center for Multicultural Families. Article 12 further mandates the establishment and operation of the Multicultural Family Support Center (MFSC), which serves as the primary social service delivery channel.

In addition to service provision, the Act addresses broader social challenges by mandating efforts to reduce prejudice and discrimination. The Act forces the state and local governments to employ proactive measures to mitigate and eradicate any stigma or discrimination directed towards marriage migrants and their family members. To this end, Article 5 of the Act states provisions mandating the implementation of an awareness-raising program intended to promote comprehension among non-multicultural members with regard to multiculturalism.

Over time, the Act has undergone several amendments to expand its scope and enhance policy implementation mechanisms. In an amendment made in 2011, the definition of the multicultural family was expanded to cover families consisting of Korean and naturalized marriage migrants Additionally, in amendment 2020, The Minister of Gender Equality and Family, upon establishing a basic plan for supporting multicultural families, is required to report it without delay to the relevant standing committee of the National Assembly. Additionally, the scope of broadcasting service providers to whom the Minister may request the airing of promotional videos for public interest in relation to multiculturalism within the ratio for non-commercial public service advertisements has been expanded from terrestrial broadcasters to all broadcasting service providers. Furthermore, the amendment also added new functions to the MFSCs, including the prevention of domestic violence within multicultural families and the provision of support services for victims.

3.4 Multicultural Family Policy and Its Features

3.4.1 Overview of the MFP and its policy tasks

The MFP aims to address the multifaceted challenges faced by marriage migrants and multicultural families by filling gaps through comprehensive social welfare services. The policy targets four key groups, which are marriage migrants, children of multicultural families, the public in general, and stakeholders in the public sector involved in policy implementation. It tackles issues related to adaptation and social inclusion for both marriage migrants and their children. By combining regulation of international marriage, Korean language education, employment support, health services, child education support, and initiatives to enhance social participation, as well as raising awareness on a multicultural society, the policy reflects a holistic approach essential for promoting multiculturalism in contemporary Korean society. The comprehensive service content under the MFP framework is primarily implemented by the MOGEF, in collaboration with relevant ministries, as well as central and local governments.

The first Master Plan for Supporting Multicultural Families, covering the period from 2010 to 2012 marked the beginning of a systematic policy approach in accordance with Article 3-2 of the Multicultural Families Support Act, which mandates the establishment of a master plan for multicultural family support every five years. Following this initial plan, the government formulated and announced subsequent plans, including the second Master Plan from 2013 to 2017 and the third Master Plan from 2018 to 2022. Subsequently, in April 2023, Kim Hyunsook, the Minister of Gender Equality and Family, announced the fourth Master Plan for MFP, which will be in effect from 2023 to 2027. This plan mandates collaboration among 21 agencies, including various ministries and government bodies.

The fourth Master Plan for MFP envisions a harmonious society growing together with multicultural families. It targets children of multicultural families, marriage migrants, the public in general, and public

sector stakeholders. The plan sets two primary objectives, which are ensuring equal starting opportunities for multicultural children and adolescents and creating a stable living environment for multicultural families. To achieve these goals, the policy's logical framework includes four major tasks, fourteen medium tasks, thirty-two minor tasks, and seventy-two specific tasks encompassing both social welfare and social integration measures. This comprehensive structure provides necessary support for multicultural families to live stable lives while promoting their smooth integration into society.

Since the introduction of the first Master Plan in 2010, the MFP has experienced significant quantitative growth. Initially, the budget allocated to this policy was approximately USD 44 million, and its implementation was confined exclusively to central government agencies.[21] However, by 2023, this budget had surged over fourteenfold, exceeding USD 600 million, with financial contributions now drawn from both central and local governments, signaling a substantial increase in resource allocation and institutional commitment to multicultural family support.[22] This marked expansion is also clearly reflected in the dramatic rise in the number of Multicultural Family Support Centers (MFSCs), established nationwide from 2008 onwards, following the enactment of the MFSA. The number of MFSCs has expanded from a mere 21 centers in 2006 to 233 by December 2023, illustrating robust institutional growth that underscores the government's dedication to broadening the reach of social services for multicultural families.[23]

In line with this institutional expansion, the MFP's implementation structure has also evolved to accommodate the increasing complexity and scope of multicultural family needs. A key feature of the MFP's implementation is the extensive collaboration across various ministries and agencies. The policy's comprehensiveness and the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by multicultural families necessitate a broad-based cooperative governance framework. This expansion of collaborative mechanisms now involves a wide array of ministries and institutions at both central and local levels, reflecting an increasingly networked model of governance. Such an implementation model is not optional but essential, as the policy addresses a diverse range of domains, including social welfare, education, healthcare, legal rights, and social integration. The scope and complexity of these interrelated policy areas make single-agency responses insufficient.

Key tasks under the plan focus on empowering marriage migrants and securing their stable settlement. Areas of emphasis include child-rearing support, capacity-building for self-reliance, and prevention of domestic violence and international marriage-related harm. Specific initiatives to empower marriage migrants involve expanding economic participation through job skills enhancement, training programs for agricultural workers, and job-seeking and entrepreneurship support. Measures to prevent international marriage-related harm include monitoring promotional materials and strengthening oversight of international marriage brokers. Domestic violence prevention features pre-migration education, specialized counselling for victims, and shelter operations.

To protect and empower multicultural children, the plan provides support services for raising infants and young children, enhancing the learning abilities of school-age children, career development for adolescents, and emotional stability programs. For school-age children, it includes educational support for school adaptation, bilingual education promoting both Korean and parental languages, career guidance, and protection for youth from migrant backgrounds, including out-of-school adolescents. Additionally, efforts are made to develop multicultural education models that eliminate discrimination in schools and to strengthen teachers' multicultural education capacities.

The Master Plan also promotes social integration by implementing anti-discrimination measures, including inspection and monitoring of public institutions and awareness campaigns on multiculturalism. Tasks for the public in general and multicultural professionals include educational programs and campaigns to increase multicultural awareness, as well as initiatives to foster social participation within local communities.

Lastly, strengthening the policy implementation system is a crucial focus area. This includes expanding inter-departmental data integration on multicultural issues and enhancing coordination between immigration authorities and relevant agencies to ensure efficient and cohesive policy delivery.

3.4.2 Key features and approaches of MFP

Korea's MFP has evolved in several important ways. On one hand, the policy has expanded institutionally through increased resources, the development of inter-agency coordination, and a strong emphasis on multi-ministerial collaboration, as explained earlier. On the other hand, it reflects characteristics of a selective welfare

21 MOGEF, *The Master Plan for Multicultural Families Support Policy (2010–2012) - Summary of the 2011 Implementation Plan*.
22 MOGEF, *Implementation Plan for Multicultural Family Policies in 2023*.
23 MOGEF, Current Status of Multicultural Family Support Center

model, particularly in its adoption of a social investment approach and the strategic use of labelling, both of which influence the criteria for policy delivery and the targeting of services. Taken together, these elements reflect how the government views multicultural families as social resources and reveal structural distinctions in service provision based on assessed support needs, rather than explicit intent to differentiate.

The MFP is shaped by specific conceptual approaches that determine its direction and priorities. Most notably, it employs a social investment approach aimed at building the capacities of marriage migrants and their families, especially by emphasizing the maternal roles of marriage migrant women and the perceived future contributions of multicultural children to Korean society.[24] This reflects a strategic focus on human capital development, positioning support for marriage migrants and their children as a means to promote their participation in socio-economic activities. In light of Korea's demographic challenges, particularly the shrinking productive population, this approach aligns with efforts to formulate inclusive policies that mobilize multicultural families as contributors to national development.[25]

However, the implementation of this approach carries certain drawbacks. Many welfare programs under the MFP impose conditionalities that require marriage migrants to demonstrate their contribution to society in order to access benefits. These requirements tend to reinforce traditional gender norms, particularly by focusing on the caregiving and maternal roles of female migrants, and may unintentionally perpetuate their marginalization. Rather than fostering full inclusion and empowerment, such conditions can limit women's roles and increase their social burdens.

Within this social investment approach, labelling functions not merely as a practical method of identifying policy recipients but as an approach that provides legitimacy for the development and expansion of multicultural family policies. This legitimacy is grounded in two major narratives: the transition of Korean society toward multiculturalism and the framing of marriage migrants and their families as socially vulnerable groups. The widespread use of the term "multicultural" in this context supports the rationale for targeted welfare services and policy initiatives. While labelling is often seen as a way to direct limited resources to those in need,[26] in the case of the MFP, it has been formalized and institutionalized through the MFSA, reinforcing the perception of these families as distinct targets of state's welfare policy intervention.

Given this context, it is essential to critically examine the unintended consequences of labelling within the MFP. Although the approach aims to improve resource distribution and promote social inclusion, it may also reinforce social stigma and exclusionary practices, particularly because the same logic that legitimizes targeted support can also mark recipients as fundamentally different from the general population. This is one of the key features through which labelling can produce negative, unintended effects. A thorough review of these dynamics is necessary to enhance the policy framework, ensuring that support mechanisms do not inadvertently marginalize the very groups they are intended to support, but instead foster meaningful inclusion and empowerment.

3.5 Persistent Limits and Ongoing Challenges in the Implementation of the MFP

Over nearly two decades, Korea's MFP has significantly expanded in both scope and volume of services. Despite this growth, its overall effectiveness remains limited. The policy's selective welfare approach has generated unintended challenges, as marriage migrants and their children continue to face considerable barriers to social inclusion despite ongoing legislative reforms and policy improvements. While access to support services, such as parenting assistance and educational programs for children, has increased and helped alleviate some burdens on multicultural families, the continued presence of structural and practical obstacles suggests that the policy falls short of fully encouraging their social inclusion in Korean society.

Marriage migrants encounter numerous challenges, including workplace discrimination, low wages, and limited access to social capital, especially during times of crisis. Empirical data indicate that marriage migrants and naturalized citizens generally earn substantially less than the average wage workers in South Korea. Approximately 80.4 per cent of these groups earn below 2.5 million KRW per month, the country's median income as of 2021.[27] This economic disparity exacerbates their limited social and economic inclusion, highlighting the gap between policy's development progress and lived realities.

Furthermore, many marriage migrants experience significant social isolation, lacking close personal networks for discussing household difficulties, job-related concerns, or their children's education. A considerable

24 Son, "Paradox of South Korea's Welfare Policies for Marriage Immigrants: A Focus on Social Exclusion and Stigmatisation."
25 Kim and Kilkey, "Marriage Migration Policy in South Korea: Social Investment Beyond the Nation State."
26 Moncrieffe and Rosalind, *The Power of Labeling - How People Are Categorized and Why it Matters*.
27 MOGEF, *The Fact-finding Survey on Multicultural Families in 2021*.

number also lack companionship for leisure activities or access to health support, and many face challenges securing childcare during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This widespread social disconnection intensifies their vulnerability and limits their integration into broader society.[28]

Additionally, children from multicultural families, often called "multicultural children", also face multiple, compounded challenges related to social inclusion, including difficulties adapting to school and widening educational disparities. Multicultural children, who are predominantly born to Korean fathers and foreign mothers, frequently encounter hostile school environments marked by discriminatory language and social exclusion, which undermine both their academic performance and social integration. As of 2021, 31per cent of multicultural children reported academic difficulties, indicating a significant achievement gap compared to their non-multicultural peers.[29]

Moreover, school violence further intensifies these challenges. The 2021 Fact-finding Survey on School Violence reported a victimization rate of 1.1 per cent among the general student population, whereas a parallel survey focusing on multicultural families found that 2.7 per cent of multicultural children experienced school violence, more than double the rate of their non-multicultural peers. Considering that this data was collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many students were attending school remotely, the actual incidence of school violence against multicultural children is likely higher than reported.

In addition, social stigma and negative perceptions toward children of marriage migrants, particularly those from developing countries, have become entrenched forms of racial discrimination, especially in regions with high concentrations of multicultural families. These attitudes have contributed to Korean parents' reluctance to enroll their children in schools with large multicultural student populations, sometimes prompting residential relocations to avoid such schools. This trend reinforces spatial segregation and widens social divides between multicultural families and the broader Korean population.[30]

3.6 Unintended Consequences and Structural Limitations of the MFP

3.6.1 Service duplication between the implementing agencies

Due to the comprehensive nature of the MFP, its implementation requires the cooperation of numerous ministries and government bodies. While such inter-agency collaboration is essential given the wide scope of the policy, it has also led to significant overlaps in roles, responsibilities, and service delivery. This fragmentation and duplication have caused inefficiencies in resource allocation and confusion among intended beneficiaries.

Since the first Master Plan, the MFP's service delivery system has been marked by fragmentation, duplication, hollowing out, and inefficiency.[31] The dispersion of responsibilities across multiple ministries and departments, without a central coordinating body, has contributed heavily to these issues. In particular, overlapping services between MFSCs and other agencies have been a major point of criticism.[32] This problem is further compounded by the lack of awareness among marriage migrants and multicultural families regarding which services they should access.[33]

Concurrently, there are 21 mandated agencies, including various ministries and government bodies, under the 4th Master Plan for MFP. This complicated structure of policy implementation agencies leads to overlapping and ambiguous target scopes, resulting in a duplication of programs and services for marriage migrants and multicultural families. This service duplication could further result in these institutions losing their traditional institutional identity of each delivery channel under different mandated agencies, hindering their institutional functions.[34]

Regarding the problem of this duplication, the Board of Audit and Inspection's report[35] especially highlighted a significant issue in the delivery of Korean language education programs of MFP for marriage migrants. For example, both MOGEF and MOJ have overlapping initiatives aimed at supporting marriage

28 MOGEF, *The Fact-finding Survey on Multicultural Families in 2021*.
29 MOGEF, *The 4th Master Plan for Multicultural Family Policy*.
30 Kim, "I want my child to attend a school with fewer multicultural students... Avoidance of schools with many Chinese students and others."
31 Park dkk., "A study on the Effects of the Multicultural Family Support Center on Marriage Immigrant women's sense of community."
32 Kwon dkk., "The Experience of Alienation of Marriage Migrant Women in the Healthy Family and Multicultural Family Support Center."
33 Yu, "A Study on Policy Status Analysis and Improvement Plan for Married Immigrants."
34 Kim and Lee, *Research on Implementation Plans for Reinforcing Employment Competency of Marriage Immigrants*.
35 Board of Audit and Inspection, *Situation of the Multicultural Family Policy implementation*.

migrants and multicultural families, particularly regarding Korean language programs and social integration support services. Additionally, agencies under MOGEF and the MOEL often face duplication of employment services and confusion about the roles of each agency. The overlap and duplication between MOEL's employment success package and MOGEF's multicultural family economic activity support program further led to inefficiency of the support system for effective intervention.

One significant challenge regarding government subsidies is the improper allocation of funds to each agency based on its function and scope, often without recognizing the expertise of each field. This misallocation leads to inefficiencies and overlaps in service provision.[36] Various service delivery channels, including MFSCs, compete to develop similar programs, rather than collaborating to leverage their specialized knowledge and skills. This unintended competition has contributed result to the duplication of efforts and a lack of coherence in the support services offered to migrants and multicultural families.

Paragraph 2 of Article 3-4 of the MFSA states that the Multicultural Family Policy Commission should evaluate and coordinate related policies. However, these functions are not being effectively utilized, leading to inefficient use of the budget and duplicated programs. This situation arises because most of the provisions imposing responsibilities on the national and local governments are non-mandatory, making it difficult to enforce multicultural family support policies.[37]

3.6.2 Lack of effectiveness and expertise of the MFSCs

In addition to the efficiency issues of service distribution among agencies under the MFP framework, the effectiveness of ongoing services to empower marriage migrants has continuously emerged as a significant problem. Despite high awareness of MFSCs among marriage migrants and multicultural families, actual usage rates of services by MFSCs remain significantly low. According to a fact-finding survey conducted by MOGEF in 2021, while 86.8 per cent of marriage migrants are familiar with these centers, only 21.5 per cent actively utilize their services, suggesting a disconnect between awareness and engagement.[38]

This gap between awareness and actual utilization highlights deeper issues related to the quality and relevance of the services offered. One reason for the low utilization rates is the perceived ineffectiveness of the services provided by MFSCs. Many marriage migrants felt that these programs do not adequately meet their fundamental needs, such as facilitating social integration with Koreans and providing assistance in finding employment.[39] This gap between the needs of multicultural families and the services provided by MFSCs has contributed to the low engagement rates. Similar trends of underutilization are observed in community, administrative, and social welfare centers, indicating systemic challenges within the broader support network.

A key factor underlying these challenges is the limited specialized expertise of MFSCs. In particular, concerns have been raised regarding their capacities in areas such as vocational training, employment support, and referral services. Currently, MFSCs primarily offer basic training in workplace etiquette and introductory job placements, with limited involvement from specialized employment support institutions.[40] This limited scope of services undermines the effectiveness of employment-related initiatives, underscoring the need for MOGEF to develop more robust strategies that can effectively connect marriage migrants with specialized support resources.

Moreover, the 'Guidelines for Multicultural Family Support Projects' issued by MOGEF emphasize the importance of linking job seekers among the policy's target groups with specialized employment institutions, rather than expanding employment-related programs directly within the MFSCs. Consequently, MFSCs often limit their role in making referrals, without offering detailed consultation services, such as assessments of Korean language proficiency or employment preferences.[41]

Additionally, the lack of cultural competency of staff working in MFSC was found to negatively impact on the quality of service provided. Despite being in close proximity to immigrants in welfare service areas, the staff of MFSCs exhibit a relatively high level of hierarchical perception within the center based on migration background. This suggests a discriminatory perception towards marriage migrants, often towards Asians, and a tendency to perceive them as belonging to a lower group in the center. This lack of cultural competency and

36 Kim, "Employment Support Service for Marriage Immigrants of Multicultural Family Support Center: Present Condition and Development Direction."
37 Jeong, "A Study on the Improvement of the Multicultural Families Support Act in a Multicultural Society - focusing on effective social integration."
38 MOGEF, *The Fact-finding Survey on Multicultural Families in 2021*.
39 Son, "Paradox of South Korea's Welfare Policies for Marriage Immigrants: A Focus on Social Exclusion and Stigmatisation."
40 Board of Audit and Inspection, *Situation of the Multicultural Family Policy implementation*.
41 Board of Audit and Inspection, *Situation of the Multicultural Family Policy implementation*.

professional expertise in working with people with different cultural backgrounds and nationalities negatively impacts the quality of service provided.[42]

Underlying many of these challenges is the rapid expansion of services and staff, which has made it difficult to provide thorough and ongoing training tailored to the diverse needs of multicultural families. While workforce numbers have grown to meet increasing demand, keeping up with in-depth capacity building has been difficult. This is partly due to South Korea's limited experience as an immigrant society, which means both policymakers and service providers are still developing the expertise to effectively support multicultural families. Therefore, continuous training, capacity building, and institutional development remain essential to deliver sensitive and effective services for immigrant communities.

3.6.3 Lack of measures to penalize discrimination

Establishing concrete measures to prevent discrimination and racism, which remain clear barriers to the social inclusion of certain populations which is essential to achieving the core goals of the MFP, improving the quality of life and fostering social integration for marriage migrants and multicultural families. These issues are not peripheral but fundamental to ensuring meaningful inclusion in Korean society. However, the current MFP lacks specific mechanisms to address such discrimination, partly because these challenges have often been viewed as matters of social welfare rather than structural inequality. This has created a serious gap in the policy framework, leaving affected individuals vulnerable to persistent exclusion and unequal treatment.

Discrimination and racism remain key obstacles for marriage migrants and their children in adapting to Korean society, often manifesting as prejudice and stereotypical attitudes. These experiences are widespread in everyday social interactions, including in the workplace and at school in various forms.[43] The 2021 Multicultural Acceptance Survey by the Korean Women's Development Institute further revealed that, despite ongoing awareness-raising initiatives, societal attitudes toward foreigners and migrants continue to be largely exclusionary.[44]

To improve the quality of life and promote social integration for migrants, it is crucial to create a non-discriminatory environment in the workplace and the community where they live. However, the current MFP lacks effective measures to address and prevent discriminatory behavior against marriage migrants and multicultural children, especially in the private sector. Although the MFP includes policy tasks aimed at reducing discrimination in the public sector, such as school environments and broadcasting, there are no policy tasks to monitor discriminatory environments in the private sector.

A fundamental challenge to creating a non-discriminatory environment for marriage migrants and multicultural families is the absence of anti-discrimination mechanisms to regulate workplace discrimination. Importantly, raising awareness of multiculturalism alone, as included in the MFP policy tasks, is insufficient to significantly reduce discrimination toward marriage migrants and multicultural children. It is necessary to develop legal instruments and regulations to control and prevent discriminatory action. Thereby, however, the current MFP does not include any related tasks to contribute to creating anti-discrimination mechanisms.

In July 2006, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea recommended the enactment of the Anti-Discrimination Act, and the Ministry of Justice announced the bill in October 2007. However, as of 2025, the bill has remained stalled for 19 years due to strong resistance from conservative political and religious groups, especially concerning protections for sexual minorities. In 2021, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reaffirmed its call for Korea's National Assembly to enact a strong, comprehensive equality law aligned with international human rights standards,[45] but the chances of its passage in the near future remain low.

Various UN treaty bodies—including the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Human Rights Committee—have consistently urged the Korean government to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. These calls date back to CERD's 2007 concluding observations and have been reiterated across multiple reporting cycles. Despite this, the National Assembly has repeatedly failed to pass the necessary bill.[46]

42 Moon, "Factors Affecting the Multicultural Public Service Quality: Focused on the Perception of Workers in the Multicultural Family Support Center."
43 MOGEF, *The Multicultural Acceptance Survey in 2021*.
44 MOGEF, *The Multicultural Acceptance Survey in 2021*.
45 OHCHR, "Press briefing notes on Republic of Korea."
46 People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy, "Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Urges Korea to Enact Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Law."

In the MFP's history, the 2nd Master Plan for the MFP included measures to adopt and legislate an anti-discrimination law based on the general recommendations of CERD. However, due to various political conflicts and significant opposition from religious groups, particularly concerning issues related to sexual minorities, these laws have not been enacted.[47]

This continued inaction underscores the deficiencies within the current MFP, which fails to include necessary measures to create and enforce anti-discrimination mechanisms. Without these mechanisms, the MFP cannot effectively address or mitigate the pervasive discrimination faced by marriage migrants and multicultural families, thereby impeding their social integration and quality of life.

3.6.4 Over-labelling and segregation

Inevitably, labelling is used as a primary tool by the Korean government to develop MFP targeting marriage migrants and multicultural families. However, the nature of labelling exerts control and power over people, creating and reinforcing hierarchies, often at the expense of marginalized groups.[48] The MFP explicitly labels marriage migrants and multicultural families to efficiently deliver welfare to these groups. From the 1st to the 4th Master Plan, all policy objectives under the MFP have used the term "multicultural family," stressing the focus on marriage migrants and multicultural children as vulnerable populations

Although the Korean word "Damunhwa" literally translates to "multicultural," implying cultural diversity, in practice, the term has come to be commonly applied to minority groups with migrant backgrounds who tend to have lower economic status in Korea. Since the legalization of the term "multicultural family", widespread use of the term "multicultural" in the policy discourse has heightened awareness among Koreans regarding ethnic labels and reinforced pre-existing stigma and perceptive segregation of marriage migrants and their families apart from other migrants and citizens. Pre-existing negative connotations associated with the terms "multicultural" and "international marriage migration" have been amplified by support services that exclusively target marriage migrants from developing countries in the context of MFP implementation. Prior research analyzed that the term "multicultural" clearly reinforces differences from the mainstream in a discriminatory manner, often associating marriage migrants with lower social status and inherent disrespect.[49]

Furthermore, the "multicultural" label used for support services under the MFP has not only created distinctions but also established hierarchies among migrant groups based on nationality and country of origin. For example, marriage migrants and multicultural families from more economically developed countries are not labelled or perceived as "multicultural" and generally do not encounter the same negative stereotypes and biases experienced by migrants from developing countries.[50]

Additionally, although this phenomenon is not reflected in official statistics, qualitative analyses of media and news reports have consistently documented that multicultural children are labelled as 'multicultural students' by teachers and classmates within the context of multicultural understanding education, further reinforcing the divide between multicultural and non-multicultural children. Moreover, the trend was found that Korean parents have increasingly refused to send their children to schools with a high number of multicultural students due to an enhanced negative perception of the "multicultural" concept.[51] This trend is leading to clearer geographical segregation in educational environments between students from multicultural and non-multicultural backgrounds.

The over-labelling strategy of the MFP has led not only to perceptive segregation but also to structural segregation in policy tasks and service development for multicultural families and marriage migrants. Employment opportunities for marriage migrants within the public sector are exclusive compared to those available to Korean citizens.

For example, Employment contracts within MFSCs that hire marriage migrants often create discriminatory working conditions. Under the special employment policy, marriage migrants are usually hired on special contracts as multicultural instructors, Korean language interpreters, or project support personnel. These roles typically involve lower wages, a lack of promotion opportunities, and less favorable working conditions compared to general employment positions, which are mostly held by non-marriage migrants.[52] This structural distinction, linked to over-labelling in the employment process, has effectively justified wage discrimination and limited career advancement under the pretext of creating jobs for multicultural family members.

47 Kim and Song, "Improvements and Characteristics of the Laws related to Multiculturalism in Korea - focused on comparative analysis with foreign cases."
48 Moncrieffe dan Rosalind, *The Power of Labeling - How People Are Categorized and Why it Matters*.
49 Jo, "A Study on the Discrimination and Prejudice inherent in the term 'Multicultural Family.'"
50 Son, "Paradox of South Korea's Welfare Policies for Marriage Immigrants: A Focus on Social Exclusion and Stigmatisation."
51 Choe, "How 'Multiculturalism' Became a Bad Word in South Korea."
52 Migrant Labour Hope Center, *Labour Status of Migrant Women in Public Institutions*.

Additionally, despite the social capital formed with Korean citizens and work experiences being crucial for the social integration of marriage migrants and their families, most MFSCs are highly reluctant to create programs that provide an environment where marriage migrants and multicultural families can interact inclusively with Koreans. This separation of programs between multicultural families and Korean clients makes multicultural families using MFSCs feel as though they do not belong to a Korean society.[53]

The labelling approach of the MFP has created a paradox in efforts to build an inclusive society for marriage migrants and multicultural families. While the MFP aims to empower these groups through the MFP by considering them as citizens, it simultaneously can perpetuate discrimination and prejudice against them. This duality underscores the complexity of achieving inclusion and highlights the need for a proactive paradigm shift to prevent unintended issues.

4. Conclusion

The Korean government has recognized both the substantial future contributions of marriage migrants and multicultural children to socio-economic sustainability and the significant challenges they face in integration. In response, the government has implemented rapid and comprehensive measures to develop and enforce a social welfare policy tailored to marriage migrants and their families, especially multicultural children, within Korea's migration context. These measures include the enforcement of the MFSA, the implementation of the MFP, and the extensive expansion of MFSCs nationwide. However, some critical challenges remain in delivering the best output of the policy to the target populations. The issues stem from the quantitative expansion driven by labelling without ensuring substantive quality, undermining meaningful inclusion.

Service duplications between ministries and inefficiency within the MFP framework have led to fragmented service delivery, duplication of efforts, and confusion among marriage migrants regarding available services. The presence of 21 mandated agencies with overlapping functions has contributed to inefficiencies and diluted institutional effectiveness. The lack of a central coordinating body exacerbates these issues, leading to a misallocation of resources and a failure to leverage the specialized expertise of the service delivery channels.

The low effectiveness and expertise of MFSCs itself is another critical challenge raised. Although awareness of these centers is high among marriage migrants and their families, their actual usage remains low, indicating a disconnect between awareness and insufficient programs that meet the marriage migrants and their families. Also, the perceived inadequacy of services provided by MFSCs, coupled with concerns about the quality of the vocational training and family program and cultural competency, further undermines the quality and effectiveness of support offered.

The absence of effort to create effective measures to penalize discrimination within the MFP remains a strong concern for achieving social inclusion for marriage migrants and multicultural families. The lack of comprehensive measures to address discriminatory practices against marriage migrants and their families in daily interaction both in the public and the private sector remains a neglected social problem and is left as an individual experience. The persistent failure to enact a comprehensive anti-discrimination law reflects a broader deficiency within the MFP and highlights the need for stronger legal mechanisms to combat discrimination.

Moreover, the over-labelling and segregation of marriage migrants and multicultural families within the societal perception have created a paradox in the MFP's efforts to promote inclusion. The use of labels such as "multicultural" reinforces existing prejudices and stigmatizes these groups, contributing to social and structural segregation. This over-labelling not only exacerbates discrimination but also limits opportunities for meaningful integration and interaction with the broader Korean society.

In conclusion, providing adequate social welfare services to marriage migrants and multicultural families, while mitigating unintended negative impacts, under the MFP necessitates further progressive reform including increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the program, enforcing anti-discrimination measures and shifting policy approaches to achieve their social inclusion. The following recommendations are presented to steer the social welfare policy, particularly MFP, to create a more inclusive society for marriage migrants and their families. Emerging measures should be harnessed to ensure the MFP is not short-sighted in protecting marriage migrants and multicultural children and supporting their full inclusion.

Firstly, it is necessary to establish a central body to oversee MFP implementation. The absence of a central body to oversee MFP implementation leads to fragmented efforts and inefficiencies. Establishing a central body can streamline efforts across ministries and departments, ensuring coherent policy execution and reduced

53 Son, "Paradox of South Korea's Welfare Policies for Marriage Immigrants: A Focus on Social Exclusion and Stigmatisation."

redundancy align with strengthening the role of the Multicultural Family Policy Commission. Additionally, under this body, funding allocation practices could be improved for efficiency. The funding allocation process should be distributed based on the specific expertise and scope of service provided by each implementing agency, promoting effective use of resources.

To enhance the quality of support services for marriage migrants and multicultural children, MFSCs must strengthen their referral functions and case management processes. This includes identifying the unique needs of these individuals, assessing their environments, and forming partnerships with institutions that offer employment support, language education, and other services. Cultural competency training grounded in human rights principles should be implemented to ensure non-discriminatory practices and high-quality service delivery. These improvements are essential for effective support and positive outcomes of MFP for marriage migrants and their families.

Efforts to integrate marriage migrants and their families into society should emphasize fair and non-discriminatory employment practices, starting with the public sector. For example, normalizing specialized employment contracts, which pose discriminatory features for marriage migrant staff within MFSCs can set a positive precedent. Moreover, family programs within MFSCs should be inclusive, enabling marriage migrants and multicultural families to participate alongside Korean clients without differentiating eligibility based on migration background. Access should be universal, with interpretation and outreach services available to ensure accessibility.

Moreover, in schools, educators should minimize the emphasis on the concept of the "multicultural student" to reduce the risk of discrimination and bullying. Publicly distinguishing children based on their migration background can stigmatize them, perpetuating inequality. Instead, educators should focus on providing tailored academic and adaptive support based on the specific needs of the students, without labelling them as "multicultural."

A key policy task within the MFP framework should include promoting the enactment of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. This would provide a legal foundation to prevent discrimination against marriage migrants and their families, creating a safer environment for individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Such legislation would be a critical step toward addressing the structural barriers faced by these communities.

Finally, the MFP framework should transition from a social investment approach, which often limits its focus to the roles of migrants as family members or laborers, to an inclusive universal welfare model. This shift would emphasize the human rights of migrants and their families, ensuring their full inclusion within Korean society. By embracing an inclusive paradigm, the MFP can better promote respect for the human rights and dignity of migrants and their families, facilitating their social inclusion and participation as equal members of society.

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