

## DIFFERENCES IN CHATTING BEHAVIOR BETWEEN TWO KAKAOGROUP COMMUNITIES COMPOSED OF FEMALE IMMIGRANTS

LIN WANG<sup>1</sup>, YOUNGSOON KIM<sup>2,3,\*</sup> AND JIA CHEN<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Library and Information Science  
Incheon National University  
119 Academy-ro, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon 22012, Korea  
{ wanglin; chenjia }@inu.ac.kr

<sup>2</sup>Department of Social Studies Education

<sup>3</sup>Department of Multicultural Studies  
Inha University

100 Inha-ro, Nam-gu, Incheon 22212, Korea

\*Corresponding author: kimysoon@inha.ac.kr

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**ABSTRACT.** *Since the beginning of this century, the number of female immigrants in South Korea has been growing, and the government has begun to advocate a self-help group approach to help them settle and enjoy a better quality of life. However, these women are unevenly dispersed in South Korea; therefore, it has not been easy to form traditional self-help groups. This article compares and discusses the activities of two social networking service (SNS) groups for female immigrants to understand their behavioral characteristics and possible factors influencing their behavioral differences within the groups. Ultimately, the issue of how female immigrants can make better use of the self-help group approach – established through SNSs – is discussed; additionally, some suggestions are offered to improve this approach.*

**Keywords:** Chatting behavior, Self-help group, Social networking service, Female immigrants, KakaoGroup community

1. **Introduction.** Nowadays social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Wechat and KakaoTalk have become a very important part of people's daily lives. People are connected on various SNS platforms for reasons of networking, communicating, collaborating, sharing and seeking information [1]. In recent years, SNS has served as major platforms for people to develop and build their personal networks. As a tool of communication and collaboration, SNS is a quick way of creating communities and increasing a group's scope and influence [2]. Many scholars have focused their attention on researching ways to exert SNS's sociability and usability in social management. To improve SNS's sociability and application, there is a need to understand the interaction between users and the different SNS user behaviors [3-5]. Since 2006, the immigration policy has focused on the social adaptation and social integration of foreign immigrants in Korea. Immigrating women, especially, have received special attention in policies because most of them are immigrants by marriage. They marry Koreans to form continuous family relationships and become "legitimate residents" and members of Korean society [6]. However, the immigrants by marriage in Korea are scattered, and a majority live in the suburbs, causing some policy information not to be communicated and support for them not to be implemented efficiently. Thus, in order to facilitate the implementation of the policy, formatting a self-help group of immigrants through the SNS has become a policy practice. Creating self-groups is one way for immigrant groups to strengthen their social adaptability. Research on user behavior on some of the immigrant SNS self-groups could be helpful in learning about the

SNS social service function to the immigration management practice. By studying the users' interactive frequency, activity time and the much-talked-about topics, this paper compares and discusses the usage behaviors and activity of two SNS groups for female immigrants to understand their behavioral characteristics and possible factors influencing behavioral differences between the groups. In addition, it will help us to deal with problems associated with the use of SNS in immigrant social management.

## 2. Theoretical Background.

**2.1. Self-help group.** Self-help groups, also known as self-help organizations, are groups in which people provide aid to each other. In a self-help group, the members share the same experiences and common problems. Members normally try to solve these common problems through mutual assistance and realize their rights independently [7,8]. Studies have shown that self-help groups are effective for solving the social problems faced by many groups. Through this group-based approach, vulnerable members can share information, build their strength, overcome common problems, and gain more control over their lives [9,10].

**2.2. Social networking services.** Social networking services, also referred to as social networking sites (SNSs), are online platforms used by people to build social relationships with others who share similar personal or career interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections [11]. Compared to the early virtual network community, SNS is structured as personal networks and the uniqueness of SNS is that it enables users to articulate and make visible their social networks [12]. There is evidence that a broad range of benefits to users is associated with the use of SNSs. SNS is featured according to the different member composition, and varies in their functional roles. From a number of different perspectives, scholars summarize the functions of SNS and their users' motivations based on the difference in their research objectives. Kim et al. pointed out that the major motives for using SNS are seeking friends, entertainment, social support, information, and convenience [13]. Shim et al. indicated a significant moderating effect of two motivations for mobile instant messenger use, entertainment and convenience [14].

**3. Methods.** KakaoGroup is a free private group communication app, which is used by 93% of smartphone owners in South Korea [15]. In this study, two KakaoGroup communities of female immigrants were selected; their members and organizational objectives were different from each other. To avoid any statistical confusion caused by changes in membership IDs, the conversation record used was from January 1, 2017, to March 30, 2017 (the three months preceding the start of the study). The research involved data processing and a comparative analysis of this record to analyze the differences in usage behavior of these two communities when they interacted in group chat rooms on SNSs; further, the possible factors affecting differences in usage behavior were expressed.

**3.1. Case selection.** Two KakaoGroup communities composed of female immigrants and established in 2015 were examined in this study. The processes used for generating the two groups were similar, but the follow-up trajectories and composition of the respective members were different.

Group 1: This group included participants in an educational program for married immigrants. Most of the members were Chinese, and the others were immigrant women from Vietnam, the Philippines, and Thailand, among other countries. By the date of the data collection, the number of members had risen to 108. In the development process, Group 1 developed gradually from an unorganized to an organized form. The group carried out voluntary social welfare activities and was attempting to develop a membership system; gradually, it was beginning to form the characteristics associated with a social organization.

Group 2: This group was developed for Chinese immigrants through a district-level multicultural support center. The center’s staff facilitate notification of the group’s activities. By the data collection date, there were 177 members – all Chinese immigrant women. By that date, Group 2 had no organizational structure or opinion leaders. Except for special event announcements, members communicated with each other spontaneously.

**3.2. Statistical method.** Using KakaoGroup’s own chat history record export function, the methodology in this study involved importing dialogue between members into Excel to count the number of times a certain word appeared in a customer list; Excel’s COUNTIF function was used for this purpose. The members’ message frequency and the number of their hourly and daily messages were calculated; additionally, the peak in the dialogue text was analyzed and classified.

**4. Results.**

**4.1. Activity.** Regarding the overall activity of interaction within the KakaoGroups, it was found that members of Group 2 were much more active than members of Group 1. Based on the overall statistics related to messages, in 89 days, Group 2 recorded 6,876 messages, whereas Group 1 recorded only 623 messages. The individual activity of the members (Table 1) shows that 76% of the members in Group 2 posted text messages; in Group 1, the percentage was 57%. Moreover, although about half of the Group 2 members sent more than 10 messages, only 12% of Group 1 members did similarly. Clearly, Group 2 was more active than Group 1 in terms of both the total number of messages sent and the overall activity of members.

TABLE 1. Statistics of members with different degrees of activity in sending message

Cumulative number of messages sent by individual members	Members in Group 1		Members in Group 2	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Over 10 messages	13	12%	84	47%
Over 5 messages	29	27%	101	57%
Over 1 message	62	57%	134	76%

**4.2. Active time distribution.** In terms of the distribution of the active time of group members, the time span of member interaction in Group 2 was longer than that for Group 1 (Figure 1). The members in Group 1 did not leave messages until after 07:00 and they did not “disturb” one another after noon. The message peak appeared in the morning probably because Group 1 was gradually developing into a charity organization. Charity parties were held by group members and their behavior of coordinating work in the morning was more likely to cause the peak in the morning. Members in Group 2 began leaving messages and interacting at 08:00. The distribution shows four curves with similar peaks during the day. In addition to the lunch and dinner time points of 12:00 and 18:00, 08:00 and 16:00 are the respective starting point and endpoint of the first two curves. These two points coincide with Korean primary school students’ school hours and, according to South Korean Ministry of Education statistics, nearly 80% of multicultural children are of primary school age. In other words, except for time spent cooking and delivering children to school, the interactive behavior of members in Group 2 is associated with a relatively stable degree of activity.

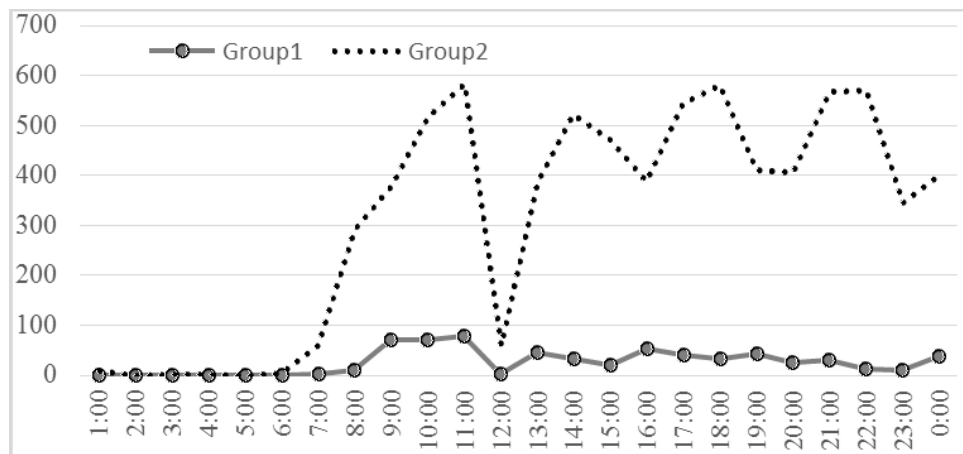


FIGURE 1. Distribution of the active time of group members

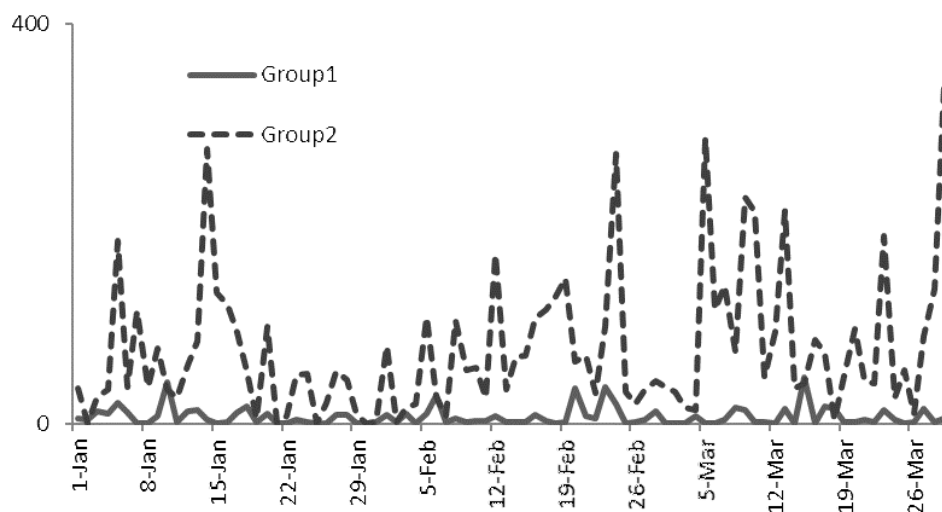


FIGURE 2. Statistical curve of daily messages

**4.3. Interactive hot spots.** To examine the hotspots of messages in the interaction between group members, this study analyzed the statistical curve of the daily messages. Group 1's curve is relatively flat (Figure 2); only two days' daily messages exceed 40, namely the explaining of policy terms on March 15 (46) and the call for group meetings on January 10. Group 2 had more than 300 daily messages in the last two days of the study period, and there were six days when there were more than 200 daily messages. The topic on March 29 and 30 was created by a news event related to children living near most members of Group 2. Furthermore, there was a similar news story regarding kindergarten children on February 24. Other topics promoting the active interaction of members include life information communication – such as how to apply for a new passport or driver's license – life experience exchanges related to a child's adaptation to school life, immigrants' language learning, and commercial behavior within groups, such as selling homemade food.

**5. Conclusions.** Based on the results of data compiled from the study – and considering the members' individual activities and overall group interactions – Group 2, with members from the same country, outweighed Group 1, with members from different countries. In terms of the hot topics promoting members' interactions, Group 2 (whose members had the same cultural and language background) focused on discussions of broader topics,

such as sharing life information or experiences and approaches to children's education, whereas the content of the interactions within Group 1 was more about administrative communication rather than life communication. The particularity of the countries of origin always exists. In general, although the subjects married female immigrants, they were members of different national groups, and the differences between the groups were greater than the similarities [16]. From the interactions of Group 1 members, we know that female immigrants tended to have closer interactions with country-of-origin friends because of common experiences related to life and culture. Through the analysis of interactive hotspots, it was noted that issues about settlement and children's education were topics of particular interest among immigrant women. In other words, the self-help group approach based on SNSs is a viable way to help such women settle in a foreign country. Ensuring that members have friends of the same cultural and linguistic backgrounds would make this approach more effective. While carrying out research in the future, by analyzing data in texts of the SNS activities online, this paper will further analyze the interactive features and exchange contents among immigrant SNS users from similar cultural backgrounds, and provide solutions on how to make the SNS users use their sociability and usability to spread immigration policies and improve immigrants' social management. Therefore, this research is of great practical value.

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