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A Critical Examination of South Korean Manager Moms: English Language Education Practices in a Context of Truncated Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

This study explored the lives of South Korean ‘manager moms’ within the integrated conceptual framework of Korean Confucianism, English and globalisation, and lifelong learning. To understand these ‘manager moms’ and shed light on the topic of mothers in the educational field, what they do for children’s English language education and how they go about doing it were investigated by qualitative research methods. Thirty South Korean participants were involved in articulating their perceptions of ‘manager moms’ and/or being ‘manager moms’ in the male-centred Confucian society; they shared their experiences and stories through interviews, focus group meetings, observations, and diaries. These personal stories demonstrated how their daily conducts as ‘manager moms’ affect themselves, their children, family, and the wider society. Their devotion and enthusiasm towards children’s English language education confirmed the significance of this global language in the South Korean society and at the same time verified the unique position these mothers hold in this context.

The study aimed to investigate why this ‘manager mom’ phenomenon is happening, what it means, and why it is important by focusing on listening to the voices of mothers themselves. To these mothers, children’s education means so much; it means fulfilling responsibility to maintain the collective family name, identifying themselves within the family and society, and ‘succeeding’ as mothers (Lee, 2011). The notion of ‘succeeding through education’ that provides people with power ties nicely into the scholastic Confucian doctrine that has shaped the South Korean society for a long time. Through education, hereditary succession of wealth and credentials are legitimately passed down (Lee, 2016) which is embedded in the ruling philosophy of the nation.

To analyse the rich data effectively, thematic analysis was employed. With the derived themes, a model was conceptualised which initiated the formulation of a substantive theory explaining the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon. The findings of this study demonstrate that there are micro, meso, and macro levels of forces that drive the phenomenon; personal desires, familial expectations, and societal pressures governed by Confucian values mingled with added powers brought in by globalisation have shaped a new motherhood or mother image called ‘manager moms’. They take certain actions and approaches to be ‘successful’ mothers and earn a certain position within the household and society. The processes these mothers go through and what they achieve from these conducts are understood from the perspective of lifelong learning.

By exploring lives of ‘manager moms’ who indeed occupy a special place in society, this study managed to capture voices of mothers who hold the most power in children’s education but whose opinions are ironically underrated. After all, mothers are the first and last teachers for their children who guide and coach children by providing endless love and support.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

“Women are weak, but mothers are strong.”

— Julie Otsuka, *The Buddha in the Attic*

1.1 Statement of the Problem

South Korea has been experiencing a socio-educational phenomenon locally known as ‘English Fever’ (Park, J. K., 2009; Seth, 2002; Sorensen, 1994). Having a good command of English language is a must these days in South Korea since it plays such an important role in one’s life. From cradle to grave, one’s English test scores will follow him/her everywhere; those English scores not only decide the schools one will attend but will affect the job and social status (Lee, 2016). Park & Abelmann’s (2004) statement that, “English has long been a class marker in South Korea” (p. 646) demonstrates how South Koreans value English. English language now has become more of a tool to succeed which is worth more than “its practical use” (ibid). The pressure and expectations of polishing up their English language skills often exceeds perceived ability which ever so often weigh South Koreans down (Kim, K. S., 2010) and the rigorously competitive environment of South Korea only adds to the stress people suffer in learning English. Adding to this, English has arguably become the lingua franca across the world and in order to be a competent member of the fast developing global society it is believed that speaking the dominant global language is more than necessary (McKay & McKay, 2002). Consequently South Koreans spend huge amounts of time and money to enhance their English language skills.

Backed up by the notion of ‘English Fever’, this study intends to investigate the rising phenomenon of ‘manager moms’¹ in South Korea and how they cope with educating their

¹ Usage of the word ‘mom’: ‘mom’ is used instead of ‘mum’ throughout this study when discussing the ‘manager moms’ of South Korea to fully reflect the dominance of American English in the South Korean society which is explained throughout the thesis. It should be noted that though the fieldwork was carried out in South Korea, the

children in an ‘educational frenzy’ society (Oh, 2010). The main focus of this research is to examine South Korean mothers on how they manage, guide, and for some, how they teach their children English. In addition, special attention is paid to how ‘manager moms’ situate themselves into learning English in order to assist their children’s foreign language learning endeavour. English language, one of the major driving forces behind the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon, is investigated to understand parents’ motivation and beliefs within the South Korean context. I concentrate on South Korean mothers’ perception of themselves as ‘manager moms’ and how they negotiate their identity as ‘manager moms’ through relationships with others and social settings in a male-dominated cultural context. I also aimed to understand the actions they take to be effective and efficient ‘manager moms’ by exploring their ‘truncated’ version of self-directed learning of English for their children.

English language has inevitably become a part of South Koreans’ daily lives. Children study it to gain admissions to the best schools, mothers study it for their children’s success, and workers study it to get promoted; practically everyone living in South Korea is experiencing the ‘English Fever’ (Park, D., 2009). This study also investigated the reasons why academic achievement in English language curriculum has become crucial; is it to cultivate global leaders who represent the country positioning the nation in a better place on the world stage, is it culturally encouraged, or is there a different reason? What drives this phenomenon?

1.2 Rationale

I present a short plot from a popular South Korean drama titled ‘*Qualification of a Wife*’ (aired on channel JTBC in 2012) featuring lives of South Korean mothers dealing with children’s English Language education while sacrificing their own lives, leading to confusion in identity:

study was analysed and written in a UK institution. Therefore, the thesis takes the form of British academic style and is written accordingly.

Soerae, a housewife and mother of a teenage son, decides to move to Kangnam (the most intense and exclusive educational district in Seoul) for the sake of her son's education. She continuously goes about gathering data and information on the most prominent private academies and teachers and tries to make acquaintance with other 'Kangnam manager moms'. Taking care of their children's education is everything to these mothers since they perceive academic success of their children as touchstone of determining how qualified they are, not only as mothers but also as good wives and daughters-in-law. Soerae gave up her job as a successful career woman in a broadcasting company and became a 'manager mom' only to suffer with her son. When she finds out her son's English grade is not high enough to gain admission to the private academy, all family members suffer from the feeling that they are 'failures'. Soerae's parents-in-law blame her for their grandson's low grade elaborating that their son, Soerae's husband, was a good student with excellent marks. Soerae feels like everything is her fault and is lost while at the same time she is confused with her identity; she constantly asks herself, what am I doing? Why am I here? What am I? She realises all she did for her son and family actually led them into misery, not happiness. Soerae desperately needed help and guidance not only with managing her son's education but also with her own life as a competent human being.

This story clearly captures the issues South Korean women are currently facing; the Confucian heritage of the nation suppresses women in a way that all the responsibility is placed upon the mothers especially when it comes to children's education (Kim, K. S., 2010). According to Chang & Song (2010), Seth (2002), and Sorensen (1994), numerous South Korean mothers exercise what is called '*chimatbaram*' (translates as *skirt-wind*, signifying mothers aggressively taking part in all sorts of educational activities which sometimes is seen as 'too much'). Pressures from society and even family members drive these mothers to exercise this power of *skirt-wind* and "when it is blowing, it is difficult for

a child (or husband, for that matter) to ignore” (Sorensen, 1994, p. 26). They consider managing children’s education as their most important duty so that based on the education received, children can lead a successful life and can carry on, or in many cases, uplift the family name. ‘*Children’s educational background is created by their mothers*’ is a famous epigram in South Korea. Mothers are literally assessed by family and society on the basis of their children’s educational achievements; competition amongst mothers consequentially is fierce.

My interest in this subject area was sparked while I was working at one of the largest private English institutions in Seoul, the capital of South Korea. I not only taught students but also did guidance counselling for parents. The main concerns of the mothers I met during the counselling were mostly on guiding and teaching English to their children so that children could excel in their studies. Many of these mothers were well-educated women with successful careers who expressed their guilt for not spending much time looking after their children’s studies. They were worried that their children would fall behind those with stay-at-home mothers, who could fully devote their time to teaching and helping their children. The working mothers not only worried about their children’s English scores falling behind the others but they also were anxious that they were excluded from getting rich educational information. For these reasons, intelligent women were quitting their jobs to go back home and position themselves as ‘manager moms’ and this phenomenon has been rapidly taking place in South Korea (Kim, J., 2011). Furthermore, these mothers push themselves to re-learn English language having done so at school or university, to assist their children’s studies until they think they can manage to help improve children’s grades to a certain point. For this period of time, mothers devote themselves to understanding the trends and methods of foreign language education in South Korea while actually learning English language again for the sake of their children’s education (Kim, S. H., 2013; 2006). I believe this truncated form of going back to learning and/or re-learning amongst mothers is a culturally

unique phenomenon which could be a adapted version of South Korean lifelong education (Shin, 2014; Kim, 2006).

Whilst I was working as a language tutor in South Korea, I noticed these zealous manager mothers would always wait outside the classroom till the class ended and would ask the lecturer about their children's progress and condition. Amongst those mothers, there were several who would ask the lecturer privately for individual counselling. During those counselling sessions, these mothers wanted more out of the tutors; they wanted the know-how of famous tutors so that they could actually implement some of those tactics at home. I was genuinely curious as to why these mothers so desperately wanted to know tutors' expertise and found out that they were in fact trying to be a 'teacher' for their children at home. They send their children to schools and academies, so why then do they need to teach their children at home? One of the mothers I had made acquaintance with during my teaching years at the institution replied, *"Well, to tell the truth, everyone attends schools and academies. That means they all have similar knowledge and standard. I want more for my child. 'Good' is not enough because I want my son to be the 'best'"* (Jihee/mother participant). In order to guide their children to be the 'best', these mothers take a step further in the hope to give more; something educationally more useful and valuable so that their children can thrive in their studies.

These mothers usually form cliques and share exclusive information and hire a private tutor not only for their children but for themselves as well (Lee, 2011). These 'manager moms' try to learn academic English themselves so that when they feel their child needs help and guidance at home they can jump in anytime (Kim, 2007; Yoo & Lee, 2006). The children have school teachers, private tutors and/or cram school tutors, and their home-teachers (mothers) to rely on; the 'manager moms' ensure their children have layers of help and support to succeed in their education.

I remember one day a group of ‘manager moms’ came and asked if I could be their tutor. I thought they were asking me to privately teach their children. They smiled nervously and said that since their children were already learning from me at the academy, they were wondering if I could teach them, the mothers, to effectively guide their children at home with homework and extra pre-studies. This clearly showed how devoted and passionate South Korean mothers were when it came to children’s education. What they wanted was quite demanding. They wanted to learn the strategies of teaching academic English as well as the basics of practical spoken English language based on their level. Since they were all college graduates, their levels of English were quite satisfactory however they insisted on learning from the beginner’s level or a bit higher than where their own children stood. Even though their English skills were good enough, they still wanted to learn what their children would learn in the future. They wanted to get the gist of it so that when that time came, they could help out with their children’s study with ease. This astonished me. Many of them readily gave up their well-paid jobs as successful career women and had now delved into studying academic English in order to be home-teachers and manage their children’s education. Their devotion and passion has created a unique programme called ‘mom-brand English’ (Yoo & Lee, 2006).

As a language tutor, I felt this was a fascinating phenomenon probably unique to South Korean culture; working mothers with high educational backgrounds leaving their careers to manage their children’s studies and going even further to ‘teach’ and guide their children in studying English. Also, these mothers asking tutors like myself for lessons and tips really drew me into this topic of South Korean mothers’ self-directed learning in the lifelong learning context.

I believe investigating this phenomenon to comprehend what is going on in the South Korean society would not only help shed light on lives of South Korean ‘manager moms’ but also in improving the education system for this distinctive group of adult learners and to better the arena for lifelong learning in South Korea. As a language teacher, I hope this

thesis could bring awareness to the community of educators in understanding the needs of mothers by listening to their opinions.

1.3 Focus of the Research

The overall aim of this study is to explore the lives of particular South Korean mothers called ‘manager moms’ who are more than passionate about their children’s education. By examining their everyday lives, I anticipate learning how they affect the field of education in South Korea and at the same time, how they are affected by their own actions. Furthermore, I aimed to explore the driving forces behind this phenomenon and how all these powers influence South Korean mothers in shaping their own identities. I aimed to develop a systematic understanding of the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon which wield a huge influence on moulding the South Korean society.

The students go through a gruelling curriculum in South Korea but this applies to mothers as well; throughout the period their children tolerantly study and study more, mothers patiently suffer the same, if not more. It is necessary to understand these women who hold one of the most important positions in South Korea’s education. It is not only about them sacrificing their own promising careers to stay home and ‘manage’ the educational venture of their children; it is also about their learning endeavours. Their learning needs should be recognised not only to better the education system of the country but also to progress toward a more competent society where these women can contribute their know-how and play critical roles in this purported male-dominant society (Kwak, 2002).

I believe it is crucial to define the meaning of ‘manager mom’ in the context of South Korea. There is a lack of literature on ‘manager moms’ since this is a newly developed term (Lee, et al., 2011). Though it is a recently coined term, it has been widely used in the media which signifies the intense educational fever prevalent in the South Korean society. A clear-cut

definition does not exist due to its vast scope. In my view, it is quite a complex term which holds various meanings; ‘managing’ goes beyond that of ‘helicopter parenting’ which is defined as hovering closely above and running/organising a child’s life (van Ingen, et al., 2015, Lee, et al., 2011). In this study, I employ the definition given by Kim, S. H. (2013; 2006) who defines ‘manager moms’ as those who perfectly understand what their children need education-wise and plan and act accordingly to fulfil the needs to achieve their purpose throughout their children’s educational endeavour. They form their own small clique and share exclusive information on the best tutors, best schools, hidden yet excellent texts and materials, and looking into the potential high schools and universities they intend to send their children to (Yoo & Lee, 2006; Kim, 2004). They also plan and organise an educational curriculum for the specific needs of their children (Lee, 2011; Lee, et al., 2011). Moreover, they go as far as figuring out the schedules of the most popular ‘star tutors’ in the hope of fitting their children’s schedule in, as well as learning particular subjects to aid their children’s studies. A ‘Manager mom’ plays multi-roles as children’s mother, educational mentor, model, motivator, teacher, coach, and manager (Jeon, 2011).

1.4 Research Questions

Four research questions guided the whole of the thesis; data were gathered based on these questions which were analysed accordingly. I synthesised and discussed literature with the data in order to give a coherent answer to these research questions.

The purpose of this study is acknowledged by four main research questions. The research questions I explored were:

- 1) What is the importance of English language education in South Korean society?
- 2) How is this South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon shaping, and at the same time being shaped by society?

3) What roles do South Korean ‘manager moms’ play in children’s education?

- How do these mothers position themselves in teaching and learning English?

4) How does being ‘manager moms’ shape these mothers’ own educational journeys?

-What does learning English language for a short (or long) period of time after formal education mean to these mothers and how do they perceive it?

-What is the significance of ‘short-term’ lifelong learning² of English language for these mothers in the South Korean context?

With these research questions as the basis, I looked into different aspects of being a mother in a nation where Confucian beliefs still dominate society. Furthermore, it was crucial to recognise different perspectives of these mothers in order to help shed light on developing a better way of supporting adult education in the milieu of the ‘short-term’ lifelong learning (see 2.5.2) perspective in South Korean society.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This thesis explores and discusses lives of South Korean ‘manager moms’; I focus on the reasons why they devote themselves to children’s education and investigate the actions and approaches they take in order to fulfil the heavy responsibility placed upon their shoulders. I bring in Korean Confucianism as the dominant philosophy, the importance of English language education enhanced by globalisation, and the concept of lifelong learning as the main factors which drive this phenomenon influencing South Korean mothers in shaping their identities, motivating selves in taking active roles and positioning selves in society.

² Short-term or truncated lifelong learning: a term I came up with in order to explain the uniqueness of the informal and/or non-formal way of English language education South Korean manger moms adopt, in hope of helping out their children’s education. Lifelong learning covers any kind of learning activities and processes people take in which adult education is a main branch constituting it. Hence, this short-lived learning implemented by mothers is a unique case of lifelong learning easily found in South Korean society. It is ‘short-termed’ since these forms of learning by mothers usually stop once children get into college/university. This concept will be explained in detail in Chapter 2.

These three aspects are brought together to theorise the actions these mothers take as ‘managers’ of their children’s educational journey.

As demand for English learning rises, zealous mothers have stepped out of their role as being just wife and mother and are trying their best to be a teacher to their children. However, when it comes to teaching a foreign language, especially English, the media and academic focus have been heavily centred towards learners, teachers, and the output they produce (Park, 2007). Studies on parents, especially on mothers, are scarce in the context of South Korea. The lack of attention mothers receive results in a shortage of information and understanding. I believe this research to be an original and timely study which, I hope, could play a role in drawing attention to the hard work of ‘manager moms’ and the literary attention they deserve.

I perceive this ‘manager mom’ phenomenon to be underpinned by the dominant East Asian philosophy, and concept of globalisation which has become a driving force for heated competition rife throughout South Korean society. These are all thickly interwoven with morals, values and tradition which influence not only the present but also the future of a nation. Situated within the broad arena of sociolinguistics globalisation, it is noteworthy to define and give meaning to the conducts practised by ‘manager moms’.

I believe ‘Manager moms’ are one of the most important segments in the broad field of English language education in South Korea and by undertaking this study, I hope to divulge the lives of these mothers. They constitute a special place and are positioned distinctively in the educational community. I hope to share the experiences of my participants and add my understanding of this interesting phenomenon to shed light on the ideas, needs, doings, and lives of this particular group of mothers so that this study could help acknowledge the importance these mothers bring to the society. I believe that the methods and methodology that I employed fit well with the topic and the research ethics that I carefully followed support the quality and authenticity of the study. Each step of the research was designed and

carried out so that the thesis could support the voices of my committed participants. I am aware that my participants do not speak for all South Korean mothers, however their stories do disclose valuable insights into understanding the devoted lives of these mothers living in a complex world.

1.6 Contextualising my Stance

The researcher's positionality is vital due to his/her value and background affecting the whole process of the study. Discussing the researcher's positionality "helps us see the barriers and the limits" (Hammond & Wellington, 2013, p. 118) such as "problems of subjective interpretation...[and]...gaps in background knowledge" (ibid). It also states where the researcher stands in his/her study and gives the opportunity to reflect upon his/her research (Sikes, 2004).

My positionality in this study provides unique features. I am a South Korean raised in America who is familiar with the American education system and culture yet has been obviously brought up by South Korean parents in a very Confucian driven Korean way. I believe I am a product of both systems that positions me in a distinct place when discussing contexts and cultures. My participants (mainly mothers) are negotiating their stances in a male-dominated society by portraying themselves as mothers rather than women. I am in the middle of this phenomenon having experienced this from my own mother, a former manager mom, and my sister, a current manager mom as well as the parents of my students. As a South Korean, a daughter, a sister, and a teacher, I feel I owe them my time and energy to understand them more fully and let their voice be heard. I carried out this study believing that I may understand and view this 'manager mom' phenomenon from a somewhat different angle due to my educational and cultural background.

I have not forgotten to constantly reflect on myself as a researcher to make sure my actions and words are trustworthy (Krefting, 1991). In order to keep the integrity of the study, I counted on my participants for member checking throughout the whole study and offered them my own perceptions and thoughts (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). I effectively utilised my field notes, which “became a part of [myself]” (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 92) and journal to reflect back every time I needed inspiration and motivation.

As a proud citizen of South Korea, a daughter who is forever indebted to her parents, a woman, and a language teacher, I wanted to talk about mothers – our mothers – who are always there, quietly sacrificing their dreams for the sake of us. My desire to write about mothers grew when I realised how my mother devoted her life for my sister and myself, giving up her teaching profession and seeing my sister, who has been self-confident and successful with her career, do the same thing for my niece and nephew’s education. I sincerely hope this study acknowledges and speaks for their actions and their lives albeit slightly. I present this thesis in hope to better understand and feel these mothers’ effort and difficulties they face so that their determination could be recognised.

1.7 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of five chapters and the layout is as follows:

Chapter 1 introduces and summarises the phenomenon explored in this study supported by my experience as a language teacher in South Korea. I also discuss the focus of the study which shaped the core research questions. Then the importance of this study and my positionality to make clear where I stand in this research are presented. In Chapter 2, literature related to the core phenomenon are introduced and discussed. I elaborate on the performative nature of South Korean society backed up by the Korean Confucian ideals and discuss the relationship between Confucian principles and the accelerated importance of

English language in the globalising world. A part of Sociolinguistics of Globalisation is employed to justify the arguments made on the importance of the English language in certain societies. Then I move to discuss motherhood and how it is socially framed in modern societies such as South Korea. This is followed by the discussion on the actions these mothers take based on lifelong learning are discussed. Finally, I briefly engage with the theoretical aspects by bringing together my research framework; Korean Confucianism, English language education fuelled by globalisation, and lifelong learning. The conceptual basis is deliberated in order to set a sound base for the research. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and methods used for this study; I start with the research paradigm and positionality that guided the research which are followed by the research design and method of analysis. I then move on to focus on the ethical considerations and researcher reflexivity. The next chapter, Chapter 4, displays the findings and discusses the results of the study by introducing a practical model which I have adapted to present the interpreted data. I elaborate on the themes of my findings that were developed based on this model; five core themes are illustrated accordingly. The results of the study are further developed by discussing the literature and reflecting on the interpretation of findings which leads to a developed theory that was guided by the conceptualised model. The last segment of the thesis, Chapter 5, concludes the study by discussing the contribution and suggesting topics for future research. Limitations and reflections are included as important sub-sections of this chapter.

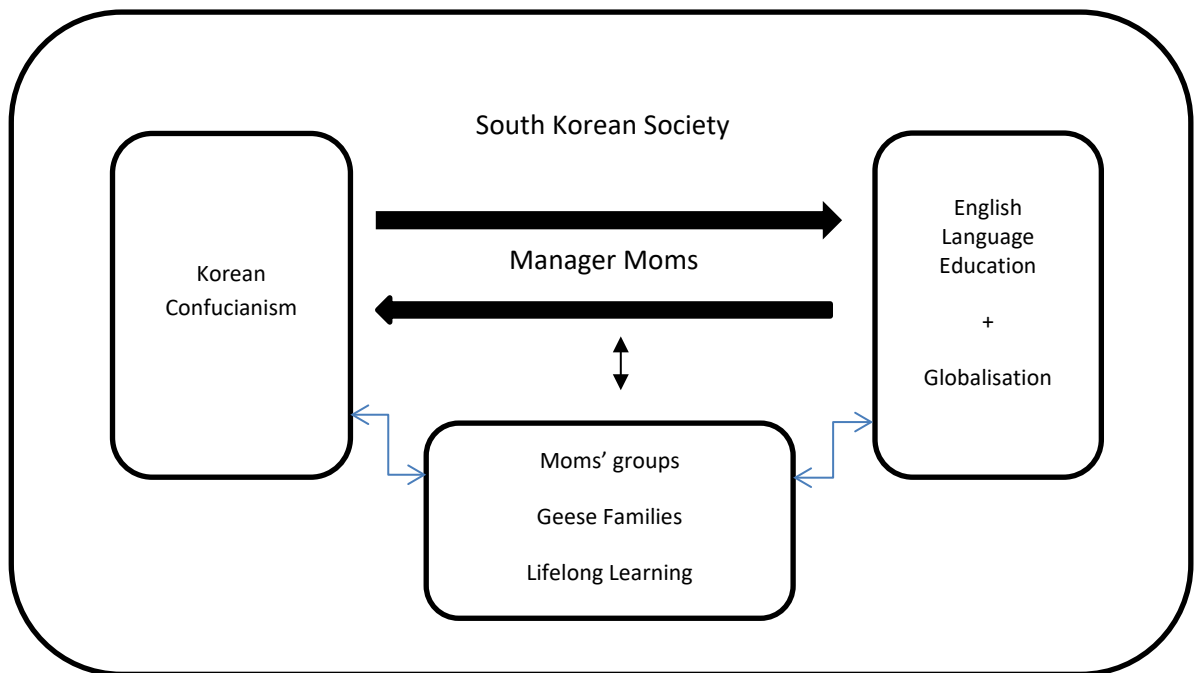
CHAPTER 2 Literature Review

This chapter draws on literature related to the overarching theme of this research which identifies the various forces that influence the phenomenon under investigation. I acknowledge that it is vital to understand where my research stands amongst other studies and recognise various viewpoints to help enhance the quality of this study and contribute to knowledge (Wellington, 2000). The main discussion of this study is on South Korean ‘manager moms’ and how they cope with the overheated English language education of South Korea. The literature focuses on the salient features that mould and shape the lives of ‘manager moms’ and the actions they take; I begin with the broad themes of Korean Confucianism and the impact of globalisation³ that actuates the English language education. Then I focus the topic down to discuss the micro level issues surrounding the ‘manager moms’ phenomenon. Situated within the broad realm of foreign language education expedited by globalisation and Confucian philosophy, the investigation of South Korean ‘manager moms’ stimulates the discussion on the position of English language in South Korea, the emergence of geese families and moms’ groups, and a distinctive adaptation of lifelong learning.

I start out building the foundation of this chapter by giving an overview of the South Korean society and how it functions. I then move on to discuss and evaluate the forces driving South Korean mothers; centred by the dominance of English language education and historical factors and the main philosophy governing the society, the actions and approaches they take are deliberated. The outline of the literature is introduced in a nutshell below (see p. 15 Figure 2.1).

³ Globalisation: Amongst the vast and vague definitions of this term, I adopted Pennycook’s (2010) definition for this thesis. According to Pennycook, globalisation is a process of compressing, condensing, and linking social, economic, cultural, and political events at a global level that impacts people’s lives everywhere in different locations. He focuses on tying up the English language with globalisation since it is “embedded in many parts of the global system” (p. 115). Hence, I use globalisation to particularly focus on the spread and dominance of the English language. The English language here is seen as one aspect of globalisation.

Figure 2.1 Outline of Literature



2.1 Meritocratic South Korean Society

In order to understand the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon of South Korea, it is vital to discuss the context in which this is currently happening. Thus, the need for an overview of the South Korean socio-cultural background was envisaged at the outset of this chapter.

South Korea is a dynamic country with a rich heritage; the society is largely homogeneous yet the atmosphere of the country is truly international (Song, 2012). It is a nation that prides itself on astounding economic development referred to as ‘the Miracle on the Han River’ during the 1970s and 1980s; the remarkable reconstruction and development of the nation due to rapid growth of Korean-based international businesses backed up by governmental support and diligent population armed with devotion to education transformed the poor, war-torn nation into a developed country (Bridges, 2008; Stewart, 1997). “Globalisation of markets, capital and technology” (Stewart, 1997, p. 329) has brought neoliberal systems and ideas through the wave of globalisation which undoubtedly affected

South Korea to be placed amongst developed countries. The predicaments of neoliberal aspects spread widely by these businesses and politics have greatly influenced the society in every respect (Park & Lo, 2012). It has become a nation governed by neoliberal market values yet at the same time strictly following the underlying philosophy that has shaped the society for a long time, the Korean Confucian doctrine. South Korean society is a great example where the old traditional features and the technologically advanced world harmoniously mingle to create dynamic atmosphere. Forces of globalisation have been mostly manifested by international companies and a large influx of migrant workers yet the fundamental beliefs and everyday lives are based on the collective Confucian values that drive the largely homogeneous, monolingual society (Song, 2012) with education being the key to market success (Stewart, 1997).

Forces of globalisation have not only accelerated the nation to be internationalised in the business sector but have also affected how South Koreans perceive the English language education; through governmental education policies, South Korean people have learned English as a compulsory subject, however, it has become one of the most crucial part of educational curriculum since the financial crisis of the 1990s hit the nation hard (see 2.3.1). Aided by the education fever strongly affecting the society, English language has become the most important subject to master in order to ‘succeed’ in South Korea (Park, J. K., 2009).

2.1.1 ‘Education Fever’ of South Korea

Educational fervour refers to enthusiastic motivation on education; in South Korea, this has transformed into ‘education fever’ driving the society to produce performative members through ruthless educational competition. Parents earnestly desire for their children’s academic success and children strive to fulfil their parents’ aspiration; this cycle of over-zealous ambition towards success through academic accomplishment has shaped the South Korean society into this education feverish state (Kim, et al., 2005). The nature of

‘education fever’ is seen as a combination of intense love parents hold for their children and their desire for achievement that brings honour to the family. Looking into this phenomenon macroscopically, education fever has its roots in the resource, class, and emotional structure of the society mainly derived from the Confucian social values (Lee, J. G., 2003); indeed “the tradition of Confucian elitism was important to accelerate educational fever shaping a competition-oriented doctrine in contemporary South Korean society” (Lee, 2006, p. 5). South Korea is a hierarchical society colonised by ‘education fever’ tightly connected to Koreanised Confucianism which is further discussed in this chapter (see 2.2).

In South Korea, living in and breathing the ‘education feverish’ atmosphere and competing for better test scores has become a lifestyle (Lee, 2011). Commonly referred to as ‘exam Nation’ or "examinitis Koreana" (Robinson, 1994, p. 513), South Korean education indeed puts major emphasis on the college entrance examination which heavily influences one’s future status. This system that brings about ‘education fever’ is “propelled by pressure from parents and sustained by the exceptional study habits of their children” (Robinson, 1994, p. 513). Kim, M. (2009) sums this up clearly by stating that in this society, “you either study hard or you do not exist (□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□)” (p. 18). In line with this claim, Ellinger & Beckham (1997) also assert that, “South Koreans view education as they view the rest of life: a process of winning and losing” (p. 625).

When human anxiety meets immaturity of society that has limited resources for its people to succeed through various channels, it creates ‘education fever’; this anxiousness includes sustaining one’s wealth, status, and honour and properly handing them down to his/her children. In order to maintain what they hold, people cling onto the main source that provides the opportunity to keep and enhance their asset. This, in South Korean society, is education. ‘Education fever’ is a socially constructed phenomenon that demonstrates South Koreans’ craving to achieve various responsibilities assigned to them; at the core of this

stands their desire to improve the child's future for the sake of maintaining the family status (Robinson, 1994) which is elaborated in this chapter (see 2.2).

2.1.2 The Heart of South Korean Education: Daechi District of Kangnam, Seoul

Numerous South Korean parents take their education management business seriously; they not only leave their occupations but they move to certain regions just for their children's education (Sorensen, 1994). At the centre of this phenomenon is the Mecca of South Korean education, the Daechi district; based in the middle of the affluent Kangnam area in Seoul, this is where all eyes of South Koreans are focused on when it comes to education, the region where all educational infrastructure is situated uniquely to serve the academically passionate population, especially English language education. Daechi, where the majority of famous private institutions and cram schools are situated, is the hottest place 'manager moms' roam day and night (Kim, 2004). It is not surprising that this area is called the centre of South Korea's education fever.

Residents of Kangnam hold pride in their 'Kangnam membership' which represents their socio-economic status (Lee, 2014). This is where intense reproduction of existing class structure is rigidly held onto through education. Education here is perceived as a tool to maintain the symbolic power the area of Kangnam and the Kangnam residency hold; English language education stands in the middle of this power. The interesting fact is that even amongst the rich in Kangnam, the mastery of English language is seen as a tool to divide those who are 'just' rich to those who are well-educated and affluent at the same time (ibid). The economic and academic differences drawn amongst demographic groups are clearly illustrated in Kangnam region (Kim, S. Y., 2008).

Daechi district of Kangnam is where the best private institutions and cram schools are situated with the most famous star tutors on standby (Park, et al., 2015; Kim, S. H., 2013,

2006); this is where parents, students, tutors, and educational information all congregate and accumulate knowledge, wealth, and power. This is an eccentric region where wealth, power, and education come together and form an intense and feverish atmosphere where endless competition and wariness wear people down but it is where numerous people want to come and claim residency since power is bestowed in the address (Lee, 2014; Kim, S. H., 2013, 2006); this is the heart of South Korean education and the contextual setting of the study where ambitious parents and children flock in order to succeed.

2.1.3 Rise of Star Tutors and Private Cram Schools

Largely due to the feverous zeal towards education and not being satisfied enough with the public education system, supplementary private tutoring schools, generally known as cram schools, have become widespread in the country (Park, et al., 2011; Lee, 2005). These cram schools have grabbed attention by providing customized educational services quenching students' and parents' insatiable thirst for additional tutelage. Attending these supplementary institutions after school have become a norm for South Korean students throughout the whole nation which is supported by Park, et al.'s (2011) study asserting that eight out of ten South Korean school students have had at least one type of private tutoring. The popularity of cram schools overshadows the mainstream public schools' curricula (Kim & Lee, 2010) which has become a major problem in South Korea but the reputation of famous supplementary schools and the so-called 'star tutors' these institutions hold attract the student and parent population. These 'star tutors', who are famous for their strategic performance and thorough planning of learning management, are usually employed by certain private cram schools but are literally seen as an 'individual enterprise'; these tutors have their own team that supports their teaching and manage their busy schedule. Not surprisingly, the most famous cram schools and star tutors congregate in Kangnam region where 'the best' are constantly in demand (Kim, 2004).

Often called ‘shadow education’ (Lee & Shouse, 2011), additional after-school learning provided by cram schools has deep roots in East Asian societies. In the same vein, Bray & Kwok’s (2003) study asserts that in Confucian societies “cultural factors played a role insofar as pupils and their families were influenced by peer pressures, institutions were influenced by comparisons with other institutions, and the whole society was influenced by Confucian...values” (p. 619). In societies where Confucian values prevail as national philosophy, academic credentials hold an imperative place. Since “university advancement has become a gateway of social success” (Lee, 2006, p. 9) and is seen as a ticket to “economic affluence of families” (Kwok, 2004, p. 66) as well as enhancing the family name to the height of fame which is deemed as being filial to the collective family, it is not surprising that South Korean parents are “increasing educational expenditure on school age children” (ibid) and sending them to as many cram schools possible. Put simply, Confucian driven society where “the system of college entrance examinations [urge] a drastic competition between or among schools, parents, and students, leads to private tutoring and impedes the normalization of school education” (Lee, 2006, p. 9).

2.1.4 Surviving in a Performative Society: Striving for the ‘Best’ in a Neoliberal Context

After the Second World War, the economic state of the United States flourished which has led people worldwide to hope for the American dream. In the 1960s, the American government implemented neoliberal policies in order to spur economic growth which had started showing signs of slowing down. To relive the golden age of economic prosperity, neoliberalist ideology was seen as the right choice. This notion, however, has brought a new phenomenon called, ‘winners take all’ that naturally came with a culture of endless competition (Harvey, 2005). The rigid hierarchy in society based on a neoliberal concept accelerated the gap between the rich and the poor and has continued till now. Through the

wave of globalisation, neoliberalism has broadly influenced the world (Yang, 2011). Neoliberal globalisation places importance on economic marketization (Torres, 2008) which inevitably draws on performativity of human capital. This huge trend has influenced people's lives across the world; it has brought in different levels of Western ideas into South Korea and has intensely Americanised the society in various conducts (Tu, 1996).

Living in a society where "performance is becoming a key quality of endeavour" (Kershaw, 2001, p. 203), persons' values are being "constituted through performance" (ibid). It is impossible to leave out the discussion of 'performativity' in a neoliberal capitalist state. 'Performativity' is a neoliberal discourse used to describe a new approach to regulate and govern society based on "advanced liberal" (Ball, 2003, p. 215) method which puts emphasis on testing, grading, and setting goals that meet the societal needs. Ball stresses that a performative worker is required "to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations" (2003, p. 215); this gives those who want to make a success of themselves a great opportunity to do so but with a huge burden. Kohn (1992) believes education and the workplace are focused towards meeting this performative culture of teaching and learning which narrows focus when what is truly needed is the ability to see the bigger picture. However, it is hard to deny that in a modern knowledge-based economy, absorbing information, which is seen as knowledge, is "the primary source of economic productivity" (Bentley, 2000, p. 17) and an essential means for wealth (Yang, 2003). Performativity is an effective economic tool to control human resource in a capitalist society where a better figure of output is demanded (Locke, 2015).

South Koreans live in a society where they are expected to be performative workers and one of the strongest ways to sell themselves as productive laborers is to excel in their education. Performativity of mothers, therefore, is as important as that of the children; the better mothers perform as competent 'manager moms' by raising academically successful children, the greater the recognition they receive from the community will be.

Early economists accepted family as the basic unit of society and married women were seen as workers in family businesses. However after Adam Smith (in the late 18th century), economists began to define housewives as unemployed, non-productive, and dependent characters (Folbre, 1994). This ‘invisible hand’ that operates capitalist society has been regarded as the ultimate key to economic production and has led to the dismissal of the presence of women by devaluing their hard work within the household as ‘unproductive labor’ (Lee, 2011; Folbre, 1994). Thus, under the capitalist ideology prevailing in societies, women have strived to produce something valuable, something produced within the household yet crucial to society: bringing up performative children.

Mothers living in this modern society are under severe pressure that is caused by the highly demanding psychological labour of educating their children and the evaluation they receive from society; they constantly strive to fulfil their responsibility by bringing in social value to the work they do for their children (Lee, 2011). This affects the formation of relationship between parent and child in this era to have a truly unique appearance; performative society has greatly influenced parents to produce different patterns of love towards their children (ibid). Love that fits into the system and at the same time satisfies parents’ own desire to raise scholastically performative children is the love the modern society is imposing upon parents. It is no wonder that in this system, for mothers, children are assets to invest in (Zelizer, 1994).

The element of investment is hidden in the form of sacrifice; through children’s success, parents fulfil their needs. Through their child/ren, they achieve their obligation towards the collective family. What can be more exquisite than this investment? Investing in children’s education also satisfies the duty parents hold as members of society as well by socially reproducing a highly trained competent workforce (Kook, 2007).

In South Korea, it is considered that in order to live a meaningful life, one must be a person who is needed in society or else one is seen to be worthless (Jung, 2013). To live up to

familial and societal expectations, children are being educated to become competent tools, and for this they go through a gruelling process of studying filled with heavy curriculum. After all, the everyday lives are tailored to meet the standards of society. Unless that standard and system change, the 'success' people seek for in life will not be modified (Jung, 2013; Cho, 2010). Thus mothers who already know the system continue to guide their children and push them further to adjust to and succeed in the competitive environment and whilst managing their children and keeping others in check, they inevitably continue to suffer from anxiety and depression (Kim, M. H., 2015; Lee, 2011). Ironically, by feeling of apprehension, they actually feel relieved since they believe it is an indication of them doing something for their children. The structure of society, which is designed to line people up by their performativity, has produced 'manager moms' whose goal in life is to raise intellectually successful children.

To prove they are 'normal' mothers, they constantly check and pay attention to given criteria and choose other mothers who meet the criteria to form a network; the conditions in selecting their own exclusive group is grounded in performativity, top performance by mother and/or by her child. These small mother groups also display and re/produce inequality; moms' groups are small replicas of neoliberal societies. Mothers not only get comfort and relief out of these groups but they also practice their power amongst other mothers; they rationalise this as natural and to set apart from this norm means failure (Jeon, 2011; Lee, 2011; Kim, 2004). It is truly fascinating to see that mothers form their own groups not only to gather information and make friends to share their worries but they actually use it to keep those in their leagues in check. It is a jungle; a jungle for information hunting, and the mothers, the hunters, monitor each other, feel frightened, and yet maintain a strong bond. This extremely complex yet subtle form of relationship continues for a surprisingly long period of time. The logic behind all this is quite vicious; the concept of performativity that governs the capitalist state is clearly displayed in mothers groups as well (Lee, 2011).

Adding to the capitalist principle where everything is calculated into economic productivity, neoliberalism comes in to stimulate South Korean mothers again. Neoliberal ideology that encourages endless competition has evolved into a capitalist form of educational investment by society that has strongly influenced keen mothers (Lee, 2014; Chun & Kim, 2012; Park & Lo, 2012). The primary role mothers play in the neoliberal society is raising their children to have a market value in the future. 'Manager moms' planning and managing children's educational journey should be understood in this context. Neoliberal maternal affection contains the fear of failure in a performative environment (Chun & Kim, 2012; Lee, 2011).

The way mothers educate their children is greatly affected by the contemporary social structure that is reflected in the habitus of society rather than individual choice; individuals act by habitus that is unconsciously internalised within selves (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Habitus is a concept that describes the medium between social structure and human action. In the same vein, maintaining good grades and gaining admission into a prominent university is, for example, a social conception for being a good, filial child and at the same time managing such a child is the norm of being a good mother.

South Korean society does not hesitate to give the definition of 'success'; strongly tied with academic achievement, the wealth and recognition that capitalist states advocate have a massive impact on how people behave and how they define 'success' (Kim, et al., 2010). In addition, Confucian doctrine mingles in well with this neoliberal capitalist concept of 'success'. A standard model of being successful is established which is quite visible; educational achievement and getting a prestigious job are what the social system define as being 'successful'. South Koreans have lived their lives constantly listening to success stories and seeing people who are seen as 'successful' and believe that, at least, modelling after these successful people will make them happier (Lee, 2011). Lee goes on, stressing that knowing success does not necessarily lead to happiness yet mothers still want their children to succeed for they also know that conforming to the system is much easier than

going against it. In order to achieve this calculated goal, mothers become CEOs of this education business (Kim, S. H., 2013; MacGregor, 2005); their motherly affection becomes the foundation of this operation. Administrating, managing, and planning activities are carefully designed to derive operating profit to control the business. The interest gained from this investment is in the hands of mothers, the CEOs, and this determines the success or failure of mothers' lives. There is motherly pride and recognition at stake. Children's exam scores and ranking in class becomes mothers' personal asset (Kim, S. H., 2013; Kim, 2004, Cho, 1995); as a de facto CEO of a household, mothers try hard to position themselves and hold the power they have as chief managers of their family by controlling the most valuable asset they hold (Hays, 1998).

As future value is constantly being retroactive to the current period, competition has no limits in this capitalist society and this unique habitus, of course, applies to the field of education. Mothers try their best to build a firm foundation for their children to lead a stable life and while doing this, they realise they have double standards; when they see and hear talks on upward mobility through education, they think it is conceited yet when it comes to themselves and their children, it is a different story (Lee, 2011).

Confucian mind-set also adds to the importance of performativity in South Korean society. Tu (1996) declares that "[t]he Confucian scholar-official mentality still functions in the psychocultural construct of East Asian societies" (p. 7) which aligns with the concept of performativity in a society where being in a high position through academic achievement is seen as equal, if not better, to producing profits in a capitalist state. The role of Confucian doctrine is "elusive and pervasive" (Tu, 1996, p. 5) in South Korea in that it has a massive impact on people's daily lives and understanding of 'success'.

Since the 1970s, the South Korean government has made an effort to standardise the education system to be fair to everyone, and it has worked fairly well till 'the rich get richer and the poor get poorer' phenomenon appeared as a result of accommodating the neoliberal

capitalist market (Kim, 2002). This issue has permeated all levels of society and not surprisingly, in the field of education. Under a strong capitalist economy, people flock and sign up years before to enrol their children in ‘elite courses’ starting from kindergarten and mothers recommend each other who are in the same league or class; the referral system elite schools have, gives power to mothers to veto others they do not want in (Kim, M. J., 2009). The authority dominant mothers hold has put them in a special place in the educational community. Gathered together, these mothers create exclusive groups and build a strong network that lasts a lifetime. It is not easy to find other societies where elementary school alumni power is big enough to influence the society as a whole which constructs social habitus of South Koreans (Lee, D., 2010). It is hard to deny the fact that all this is happening to live according to the competitive performative society.

2.2 Korean Confucianism: The Philosophical Foundation of the Nation

This section discusses the governing philosophy of South Korea and the strong impact it has in shaping ‘manager moms’. Understanding the cultural and social norms of a society before critically examining the phenomena originated from that particular area is crucial (Huberman & Miles, 2002, pp. 179-180). Hence, I allot this section to discuss the prevailing ideology of the South Korean society to give an overall outlook of the dynamic culture and beliefs which hold strong connections to this study.

2.2.1 The Prevailing National Philosophy of South Korea

No one can deny that Confucian principles have been playing the most dominant role in shaping the structure of family and life patterns of South Korea (Park & Cho, 1995).

“Religious and ideological beliefs are the part of the adaptive culture that evolves over time” (ibid, p.117) and these principles mould people’s lives and behaviours. Confucianism is a system of social philosophy deeply engraved in East Asian culture that regulates the ethical code of society (Kook, 2007); the core value includes loyalty and filial duty which set the basis for the order of society. Confucian principle tells that harmonious human relations put society in natural order and for this, five virtues should be practiced: benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity (Hwang, 2001).

Korea has adapted Confucianism, originated from the philosopher Confucius of ancient China, and took its own spin on it as a firm state ideology during the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1897). The version Chosun applied as the primary belief system was based on Neo-Confucianism (Kim, T., 2009; Lee, 2006; Sung, 1999), which is a more solid and rational form of Confucianism that restricts other secular beliefs such as Buddhism. I use the term Korean Confucianism to refer to the Neo-Confucian values Korea has adopted and moulded into a particular philosophical doctrine fit for its people. The adapted version of Confucianism, the Korean Confucianism, has been firmly engraved into Koreans’ everyday lives since it has been regarded as the national ideology as well as the bases of moral value (Shim, 2001; Park & Cho, 1995); it has been used for governing purposes, shaping individual ethical conducts, and has also played a major role in determining social statuses (Cha & Kim, 2013; Lee, 2006).

Confucianism of Chosun was shaped and ardently practiced by scholarly aristocrats (Palais, 1984); the ruling class used Confucianism as a national philosophy and applied it politically. Korean Confucianism, therefore, is strongly based on scholastic construction. Naturally, Confucian governance and education “in accord with politics, quickened scholastic bureaucratism and elitism that centered on the Confucian meritocratic elite” (Lee, 2006, p. 5). Simply put, people who studied, practised, and upheld the Confucian values were government officials with high social status. The Korean Confucian elitism has taken a deep

hold in the popular mind which has continued till now. This, of course, has permeated Koreans' conscious awareness which apparently affect their daily actions and decisions, not to mention education (Sung, 1995). The adapted version of this ancient philosophy has transformed Korea into being called the most authoritarian Confucian society in East Asia (Kalton, 2000). Tu (1996) supports this claim by calling Korea "the paradigmatic 'Confucian' society in East Asia" (p. 187).

The philosophy that governs this society, the Korean Confucianism, is critically examined in this chapter since it is the moral foundation, the heart of Korean mentality⁴. Confucian doctrine states humaneness, righteousness (loyalty), proper rite towards ancestors and respect for parents (filial piety), knowledge, and integrity as the main virtues people should follow in everyday lives. By embracing these virtues, people should cultivate and govern selves to harmonise society (Kalton, 2000; Park & Cho, 1995). Korean Confucianism took on these principles but in a stricter way, especially in education and piety. Korean Confucianism has placed great emphasis on 'piety', righteous duty of devotion, whereas the Chinese have valued 'humaneness' and the Japanese, 'loyalty' (Lee, et al., 1996). Though derived from the same Confucian doctrine, the core values they focus on differ accordingly. Korean Confucianism is still perceived as the main ethical and philosophical basis for South Korean people.

Confucian societies put emphasis on the collective values instead of focusing on individuals (Lee, 2006). The core teachings of Confucius are based on living in harmony; in order to lead a harmonious society, it is necessary to place importance on relationships and collective collaboration. Under the patriarchal system where Confucian doctrine has governed the morale of society, women took on the subordinate role of being a virtuous mother, wife, and

⁴ Korean mentality/Koreaness: I do not try to generalise the Korean identity by using terms such as Koreaness or Korean mentality. What I mean by 'Koreaness' is to read into the collective practices of these people within the given framework that encompasses the actions South Koreans take every day based upon the dominant philosophy of the nation. From practising this cultural philosophy embedded into the ethnic characteristics, Koreans have shaped their own distinctive cultural identity that puts emphasis on relationships, the Korean mentality (Lee, J. M., 2006).

daughter-in-law and this was seen as the way to earn respect. Confucianism “masculinized the public sphere” (Chung & Das Gupta, 2007) where women were seen as shadows of men. Modernization and globalisation have affected this custom of being ‘virtuous women’ to mellow down a bit however it is still firmly engraved in the social norms (Rosenlee, 2012; Ko, et al., 2003). Simply put, Confucius believed that in order to keep society in harmony, people should abide by social rules that have different sets of duties for men and women which ultimately instil that the social ‘self’ is a part of collective society that always comes before the individual ‘self’ (Waley, 2005). According to Porras (1985), citizens of Confucian states identify themselves as a member of a group rather than seeing themselves as an autonomous individual. That is, people in these nations consider relationships with others more important than self and see themselves as a collective member of group(s) which connect them by harmonious relationships. Therefore, it is only natural to form a collective identity as a group which explains South Korean mothers actively participating in private moms’ groups and creating their own collective unique characteristics as mothers. Adding to this concept, Confucian teachings have emphasised there are things women do better and things men do better to keep society in harmony. This notion has shaped the national characteristics of South Korea and is still reshaping society and its people. I believe it not to be an overstatement claiming that Confucianism has moulded and constructed the uniqueness of the ‘Korean mentality’. The cultural hegemony heavily driven by Confucianism has strongly influenced the South Korean human and cultural capital stimulating an elitist society (Lee, 2006).

Ryu & Cervero’s (2010) study clearly demonstrates that the strong Confucian heritage continues to prevail in South Korea; “embedded Confucian values, such as group harmony, respect of hierarchy, propriety, face, bond of affection (*jeong*), and distinctive gender roles, were reflected in the everyday actions” (p. 1) influencing power relations and interests. Tu’s (1996) statement backs this up and ascertains the crucial role Confucian philosophy in the South Korean society:

The Korean moral fabric woven by family, school, and government has such a thick structure of Confucian ethics that, even though South Korea is the most Christianised of all East Asian societies, its social network (both the vertical order and the horizontal relationships) is remarkably Confucian in character ...and... the Confucian tradition still provides the core values (p. 188).

Having discussed the basis of Korean Confucianism, I now turn to the two most accredited principles (Lew, et al., 2011) of Korean Confucian values that shape the Korean mentality: filial piety and familism.

2.2.2 Filial Piety: Devotion and Respect toward Family Lineage

Confucianism has had a major influence on not only the structure of Korean society but also the moral conducts of its people which has remained extremely strong. According to Hwang (1999), amongst the teachings of Confucius, the Korean Confucian doctrine puts emphasis on the extended family, and in the middle of it stands filial piety or parental respect. Filial piety is a virtue of respect towards one's parents, having strong affection and esteem for them that stretches out to holding the family name in honour (Sung, 1995). It means respecting and taking care of parents till the end and beyond; it is a sincere form of fulfilling one's responsibility to repay what one's parents and ancestors have provided for him/her (Sung, 1999). Hence, it is not surprising that the bond between parent and child is considered more important than the relationship between husband and wife (Cha & Kim, 2013; Park & Cho, 1995). The family name is carried on by the child who holds the responsibility of living up to the expectation of the entire family. This expectation is usually tied to success which maintains or brings up the social status of the family and supposedly the best bet to climbing the social ladder is through education (Seth, 2002; Sorensen, 1994).

Confucian ethics is well reflected in competitive education (Tu, 1996) which puts great pressure upon the shoulders of women since they are the ones heavily responsible for the educational success of the children who are destined to retain the paternal family name (Won

& Pascall, 2004; Shim, 2001). In South Korean society, filial piety is a moral duty of children and it is important to note that people with successful academic achievements are usually seen as filial persons living up to the expectations of their parents. It is commonly believed that being filial is the basis of being a sound human being. With this moral engrained, South Korean people aim to lead successful lives not only for themselves but for their parents since success of their children is what parents want. For the children, 'success' means satisfying expectations of their parents and paying back for all their sacrifices and devotion for bringing them up and giving everything for their academic accomplishment. According to Confucian teachings, 'returning home with honours after rising in the world and gaining fame' (from the ancient Book of Filial Duty), especially through academic success, is the true way of practising filial piety; South Koreans have lived with this phrase in mind since the beginning of the Chosun Dynasty. In order to fulfil this obligation of filial piety, South Korean people have diligently followed the teachings that emphasise scholarship and education (Paik, 2005). It was, and still is, believed that elite education is the key to sustain one's "socio-political position and family-centred associations" that bring honour to the family name (Lee, 2006, p. 3).

'The best way of showing respect to your parents is by succeeding academically': this famous South Korean proverb sums up the importance of education and makes it easy to comprehend the 'education fever' of this country. The meaning of education in the Korean Confucian context is fulfilling one's duty to one's parents and ancestors (Cha & Kim, 2013; O'Neil Green & Kim, 2005). As for parents, they are attaining their own filial piety towards their parents and ancestors by bringing up successful children who will carry on the family name. Parents are sacrificing not only for the sake of their children but also to live up to the expectations their own parents have set for them (Lee, 1998). In a strict Confucius society like South Korea, it is understandable that people put so much emphasis on success through education. This cycle seems to be never-ending; when these children grow up, they will supposedly do the same for their children as long as South Korean society holds onto the

Confucian beliefs of putting familial relationship first. This respect towards family, especially the older generation, is also practiced outside as well making South Korea a very formal society (Rozman, 2014; Cho, 1998).

2.2.3 Familism: The Core of Collective Society

“Confucianism was not only the means to the maintenance of power and privilege to the governing classes, but also a core ideology for the upper class to sustain collectivistic familism and to establish the fundamental principle of the state” (Lee, 2006, p. 3); in this quote, Lee captures the essence of Korean Confucianism: retaining familism, the fundamental element of a collective society, to hold onto the power and authority. Familism is defined as a social structure where the collective values of the whole family take precedence over those of each individual member which is undoubtedly the major part of the Korean Confucian culture (Fan, 2010; Cho, 1998). Personal sacrifices and devotion, therefore, come naturally in the South Korean society.

Park & Cho (1995) assert that, “Confucianism may be viewed as a familial religion” (p. 118); this precisely states how familism embodies the Confucian culture in South Korea (Kim, 1996). Korean Confucianism has placed the family at the core of this society which is confirmed by literature that states South Korea is supposedly the strictest country in putting emphasis on family value (Park & Cho, 1995). Tu (1996) highlights that South Koreans regard “the family as the basic building block of society” (p. 262) emphasising the importance of familism and the special goal the members hold as a family. Focusing on collectivistic familism, rather than on individual values, people see themselves as a part of a whole family instead of unique selves (Park & Cho, 1995). One would gladly devote himself/herself for the sake of the family name that holds the clan.

Retaining the male lineage of family name in pride by carrying out assigned duties as members of the clan is the way of having a thread of connection to honouring the ancestors (Sung, 1995; Choi, 1964). Societal duties expected of men and women have been divided strictly during the Chosun Dynasty which is still prevalent. This gender dichotomy has been shrouded under the name of familism or family-oriented collectivism (Cha & Kim, 2013; Chang & Song, 2010; Shim, 2001). Lee (2011) also discusses the tension and stress South Korean women have due to their responsibility of being a capable mother, a good wife, and a filial daughter-in-law. Here, the notion of familism ties in well with filial piety. Lee (2011) goes on to argue that South Korean women yearn to be accredited and get praised by their in-laws since in-laws' approval means they are accepted as a true member of the family. This special tie between married women and their in-laws usually gets stronger with the birth of a child.

The Confucian doctrine focusing on collective and extended family relationship has become the basis of a harmonised society upon which political allegiance can flourish (Ham, 2004). Indeed, tight family relations dominate South Koreans' lives; striving to become 'elites' in this society is largely due to the responsibility as a filial family member. In accomplishing their Confucian duties, South Koreans heavily rely on education. The example of *chimatbaram* (*skirt-wind*) mentioned in Chapter 1 (see 1.2) clearly demonstrates how serious South Korean women take their responsibility towards their family through education.

2.2.4 The Meaning of Confucianism in the Globalising World

Koh (1996) asserts that Confucianism "could no longer claim any leading role in the modernizing and Westernizing republican polity" (p. 191). I question this notion; strong Confucian values are still widely seen in the behaviours of South Koreans due to their desire to reproduce what they hold and/or to climb up the social ladder and it is hard to deny the

fact that Confucian standards provide legitimacy. It may seem like Confucian values are fading away and are covered by the strong waves of Westernisation through globalisation but this is not all true. It is still portrayed strongly in people's everyday conduct. Some may feel it has no more influence over lives of South Koreans but it is still the basis of social comportment of the people. It is true that South Korea is a Westernised society however it should also be known that Westernisation has been achieved on the basis of Confucian values and is still ongoing; screened by Western ideals and culture, Confucian philosophy looks as if it is fading. Politically yes, it appears to be declining but socio-culturally, it remains as strong as before as it is one of the main foundations of being Korean (Kang, 2006).

Another interesting claim made by Kim (1996) opens up a discussion on Confucianism being a strong tool for all South Koreans to strive for becoming elites nowadays which is in line with my stance of Confucian values still standing strong in South Korea. Kim (1996) argues that the "Confucian tradition as an elite culture is no longer the exclusive asset of any particular privileged class" (p. 222) in South Korea because now it is open to anyone due to "the process of deconstruction of the traditional class system by a new social system and a new worldview" (ibid). However, the new system has brought in a different way of categorising social class based upon people's educational background which is paradoxically still driven by Confucian beliefs, where English language plays a significant role. Since the new elite culture is open to everyone, the competition has become fiercer than ever and globalisation has added to the escalation of it. Interestingly, though it seems like education is open to everyone giving people equal opportunities, it "has always played a gatekeeping role in the maintenance of higher social status" (Robinson, 1994, p. 512) in a way limiting people to climb up that social ladder.

Confucian values not only bring the nation together but this also has played an important role in adopting Western ideals and implementing them in its own unique context.

Confucianism was seen as a hindrance to modernising the country but at the same time its “positive social values such as the adoration of learning and sincerity, has been considered as a powerful motivating force behind the South Korean economy and higher education” (Lee, 2006, p. 1). Embracing and welcoming Western values through the wave of globalisation and adapting them into the Confucian society has challenged Confucian thoughts but people have learnt and managed to balance and blend in the two very different philosophies to create a unique environment in East Asia (Ham, 2004).

I concur with Kim, T.’s (2009) view that South Koreans have “discard[ed] and then reviv[ed] the Confucian legacy at different times of modernisation. However, they ... have kept the strong Confucian *pedagogic* culture, which frames the ways in which knowledge is transmitted and applied to define modernities in East Asia” (p. 857). Consequently it is safe to proclaim that “Confucianism has a huge continuity” in this country (ibid).

2.2.5 Korean Confucianism, the Symbol of South Korean Mentality

As a Korean, I believe South Korea is a nation with distinctive moral and ethical principles; it is no exaggeration to claim that the main goal of each household is to send their children to the most prestigious schools which is perceived as a noble way of worshipping the ancestors and carrying on the family name with pride (Park, D., 2009; Ellinger & Beckham, 1997). Scholastic success has a significant meaning to South Koreans historically since the Chosun Dynasty when passing the civil examination based on Confucian teachings was considered the most honourable way of uplifting the family name and paying filial duties to parents. The cultural practice of putting emphasis on education for the collective family has sprung from the Confucian doctrine that has continued on to be the prevailing philosophy of the nation (Kang, 2006). The Confucian tradition of respecting scholarship and the significance it brings to individuals as members of family and society have brought forward

the ‘education feverish’ society. Adding to this, the conception of a knowledge-based economy emerged as a substantial force affecting the globalising world where endless competition drives the notion of success. South Koreans and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) are greatly influenced by accepting social, political, and historical contexts based on these circumstances.

According to Kalton (2000), this highly educated Confucian society is said to be the strictest Confucian country in East Asia. Koreans pay high respect towards the elderly and consider courtesy and etiquette to be the most important virtues of a human. It is a male-dominated authoritative society with its population holding heavy gender divided duties to serve their household and the nation (Cho, 1998; Lee, 1998; Park & Cho, 1995). It nevertheless is a much Westernised and advanced country with intense competitive nature embedded in the society; strong Western influence mingled with existing neo-Confucian value is constantly re-shaping the pattern and behaviour of South Koreans. This is a unique country where people still practise the old Confucian teachings that have governed society for decades, and at the same time vigorously accept and/or adapt other values by embracing globalisation. Under the pressure of raising academically successful children, the mothers of South Korea are the ones who carry on the Confucian values whilst keenly accepting and studying the global language (Cho, 1998). The passion and hard work of South Koreans have constantly put the country on the top of the PISA⁵ rankings (Byun, et al., 2012) and behind this achievement stand mothers.

Mothers’ devotion toward their children’s education is not a recent phenomenon; in fact, South Koreans grow up hearing stories of big names of those with great achievements who dedicated their lives to the nation (Moon, 2002). They learn that behind those big minds

⁵ PISA, Programme for International Student Assessment, is an OECD led international assessment test given to 15-year-old pupils of member and/or non-member nations of OECD consortium every three years. It tests pupils’ scholastic performance on mathematics, science, and reading. The result of this test is tabulated and published according to the best performing country on top of the list (OECD, 2013).

existed devoted mothers like Mengmo, Shinsaimdang, and Mother Han⁶ who strictly yet gracefully and passionately educated their sons. Education holds a special place in Confucian societies (Paik, 2005); it is the way of leading an honourable life which affects not only an individual but the whole family and the nation. However, at the same time, this has inflated the standard of academic achievement which drives the people to push themselves further pressuring mothers in a position where they feel like they must sacrifice themselves further for the sake of raising scholastically successful children; it is an endless cycle for these mothers. It is clear that Korean Confucianism has affected both the enthusiastic drive towards promoting the nation as well as coercing people into fiercely intense education leading to endless competition.

2.3 Significance of the English Language in South Korea

This section discusses literature on the significance of English language education in South Korea and the role globalisation plays in enhancing the power this international language holds by understanding the current cultural linguistic situation of the nation through adapting a part of the Sociolinguistics of Globalisation concept (see 2.3.3).

⁶ Mengmo, Shinsaimdang, and Mother Han Seokbong are famous historical mother figures that represent unwavering devotion of mothers towards their sons' education.

- a) Mengmo (Mother Mencius) – It is said that Mother of Mencius of ancient China moved houses 3,000 times to find the perfect environment for her child to concentrate on his studies (Sagong, 2002). Due to her devotion, Mencius became one of the most respected scholars/philosophers.
- b) Shinsaimdang – Mother of a renowned scholar, Lee Yi, of Chosun Dynasty; she led her son by setting an example for Lee to follow by always reading and studying (Sohn, 1997). She not only raised her son to be a respected governor but she also earned reputation for her own scholarly work.
- c) Mother Han– Mother of Chosun's master calligrapher and scholar, Han Seokbong, she is famous for bringing up her son with her quiet yet charismatic guidance. When her son came back from training saying he had done enough, she asked him to write with the light off. In the dark room, she sliced rice cake while Seokbong wrote a phrase. When she turned on the light again, the rice cake she sliced was neatly diced whilst Seokbong's letters were unevenly written. Seokbong learnt from this lesson and became a master calligrapher and scholar (Kim, S. W., 2008).

The world is changing so very rapidly that in order to catch up with the changes going on, to cope with the changes, and to succeed on the global stage, keen mothers have come to realise that the most effective and efficient way for their children to fit into this diverse, ever-changing global environment and prosper is to master the dominant international language, English (Lee, 2008; Kachru, 2006). The impact of globalisation is believed to be the main reason for this educational heat on English language occurring in South Korea. Crystal (2012) and Graddol (1997) assert that the global spread of English language is largely due to economic globalisation while at the same time the spread of English has stimulated the globalisation process; furthermore, English language holds a massive power over how people and nations redefine their identities (Pavlenko & Norton, 2006). These statements by Crystal and Graddol well explain what is happening in South Korea. As a small nation with a big population, it is inevitable for South Koreans to turn their attention outside the country for better opportunities. Moreover, Western-educated ‘manager moms’ have various experiences and understandings of both the East and the West, they are capable of providing their children with different views of the world that may drive them and their children to look outside and succeed in a bigger world.

In the midst of globalisation, the world has started to accept different varieties of Englishes due to wide and diverse contexts of people using the language. Yet, in South Korea, glocalisation⁷ of the English language is being resisted and the Korean varieties of English are not seen as ‘real’ English language (Choi, 2010); rather than accepting the difference and localising the English language, South Koreans strictly stick to the standard ‘American English’ and view it as the authentic and sophisticated version. Scholars have argued that

⁷ Glocalisation is a process of adapting global ideas and assets to fit into the local context whilst seeking to maintain the richness of them (Robertson, 2012). In this thesis, glocalisation is used as a term to explain the English language that “has become increasingly localised by many communities of speakers around the world, adopting it to encode and express their cultural conceptualisations” (Sharifian, 2013, p. 1). I focus on the glocalisation of English in South Korean society in this section to emphasise that though globalisation of the English language greatly influenced the localisation of the language and has helped developing different varieties of English (Sharifian, 2010) and South Korea has its own version of the English language called ‘Konglish’, it is being neglected and is not regarded as legitimate English.

this is because South Koreans do not use English language as a daily communication tool (Kim, E. T., 2014; Park, J. S.Y., 2009); the Korean language is used all the time and English is a language used when needed such as for assessments, promotions, and to maintain societal status. Therefore, the localised English language in South Korea is explained in a different sense here; what it means is not a typical foreign nation adapting English and mingling it in with the mother tongue of that particular country but rather, adopting a strict American version, especially the accent, as a tool for success and/or maintaining the power and position within society (Namgoong & Lee, 2007; Scales, et al., 2006; Gibb, 1999, Chiba, et al., 1995). English language holds monetary value in South Korea, which, in a neoliberal society, is truly a valuable asset that gives one power (Lee, 2014; Park & Lo, 2012). The sociolinguistic concept of social varieties of English does not seem to apply in the case of South Korea due to resistance against different ways of speaking and learning the English language. This means power invested in this global language influences people, who already hold certain power, by giving them the opportunity to try to keep the ‘standard’ American way of utilising it in order to maintain their supremacy. The rigid Korean way of accepting only the ‘standard’ version of English as ‘true’ English is heavily based on Korean Confucian elitism. In order to explain the significance of the ‘standard’ American English in South Korean society, discussion on how this nation uses the English language is needed. English in South Korea is not just a global language for communication; it means something different. According to Lee (2014), Park (2009), and Seth (2002), different ideologies and beliefs have driven South Koreans to be obsessed with this language. The main reason Lee (2014), Park (2009), and Seth (2002) give is that in order to conserve the established class structure and hold on to the status and power, the ruling class elites have used this particular brand of English, American English, as an apparatus. This does not come as a surprise since throughout history, ruling class elites have commonly manipulated language to dominate others (Watson, 2007). Song (2011) adds to this argument by stating:

English has been ‘conveniently’ recruited, in the name of globalization, to reproduce and rationalize the ‘hierarchy of power relations’. Rather than using it

for practical communication, English has become a mechanism for maintaining the hierarchic power which is largely sustained through education (p. 36).

Mufwene (2002) also points out that in most of the Asian countries English has “been confined to the role of elite supra-regional lingua franca” (p. 9). This is an easy and efficient way to hold on to what they have and/or to rise above their current social status. English has become a basal condition, a qualification, rather than a means of communication. People who yearn for upward mobility conform to what has been established and desperately try to master English. This is why people hold so tightly onto mastering this language; it is the very first gateway towards success (Kim, 2006; Seth, 2002). I mainly stand with this viewpoint, however this is not entirely true in the case of South Korea nowadays; yes, if one speaks fluent American or British accented English, he/she is seen as an ‘elite’ since many people in high and/or respected positions usually do, yet I would have to say these days it is not only ‘confined’ to the elites anymore. Since the majority of the South Korean population is learning and mastering the English language due to educational policy with English language education being made compulsory (Park, J. K., 2009), it is no longer considered as a language just for elites. Though the American version of ‘standard’ English is still perceived as a basic tool for maintaining their status, it is now regarded as a ‘must’ for the majority of South Koreans to survive in the globalised world. Simply put, a good command of English language will not guarantee one a title of being an elite, however, it is a basic necessity to become one and climb up the social ladder.

The discussion on the prestige status of English in South Korea leads to an interesting point; though globalisation is one of the major forces fuelling the importance of English, the focus is on the ideology South Koreans hold. It is true that when discussing the spread of English language globalisation cannot be separated from it, however in South Korea, the emphasis is on the ‘meritocratic’ society (Song, 2011). Song claims that:

[G]lobalization is not the only cause for the importance of English, at least in South Korea, it is not as much a cause as it has been widely claimed to be. When English in South Korea is discussed, the ideology of merit operating in South Korean society and what it does should not be lost sight of (2011, p. 48).

People construct different connections with English “in terms of the different roles that it plays in their lives and also in terms of how it is employed in constructing their individual, social and/or political identities” (Saxena & Omoniyi, 2010, p. 155) therefore we “cannot avoid the issues of identity and the political context when talking about language” (ibid, p. 154). I believe this not only applies to one’s mother tongue but it also relates to foreign languages. English language shapes South Koreans’ identities since it is believed to be one of the most important assets to acquire to succeed. English indeed “meets cultural conceptualizations of the speakers” (ibid, p. 155) in South Korea by continuously influencing and reshaping the language education and the sociolinguistic landscape.

2.3.1 Historical Context

To understand what is happening now, it is crucial to look back and reflect on what happened in the past. I explore the reasons why South Koreans are exceptionally committed to studying/learning English based on the historical context of the country. Korea was never colonised by an English speaking country yet English language means a lot to the people of this country. I discuss the reasons behind this phenomenon in this sub-section.

During Japanese colonisation (1910-1945), the Chosun Dynasty not only lost the right to reign the nation but the people were forced to speak and write Japanese only. Five years after gaining independence, a painful and gruesome civil war broke out between two different ideological forces (the Communist and the Democratic) to gain power in the Korean Peninsula. The USA stepped in to aid the South of Korea where democratic government had been established; this was when American ideals and values started coming into Korea and have been influencing the country and its people (Brazinsky, 2007; Kim, 2003). After the three-year civil war, the country was divided into two different states: the communist North and the democratic South. The USA stayed present in South Korea,

impoverished by war, to keep the Communist North in check and assist South Korea to rebuild a democratic republic, which not surprisingly has become an Americanised society; the structure of the government, public schools system, and societal infrastructures have been strongly influenced by the USA. From then on, South Korea has been close allies with the United States and has naturally and openly accepted American values into the country (Kim, 2003).

The American power in the war-torn country has had a big impact on the people; The American way of living and succeeding in a society where everything seems free and placid soon became something of an aim for South Koreans (Kim, 2003; Lee, 2002). This admiration and yearning South Koreans have had towards the United States greatly influenced them to shape the society in which the dominance of Americanism is evident in cultural contexts, political arena, economy, and even in academia (Boot, 2014; Tu, 1996). Consequently, the English language has become a language that has to be mastered in order to live like those who speak the language as mother tongue. Adding to this, the impact of globalisation has reaffirmed the power of the USA and the language they speak. This phenomenon is in line with Graddol's (1997) argument that the global influence of English language has to do with the authority the USA holds which leads the spread of English language along with its economic, political, and cultural power. Uh, et al. (2012) also assert that due to American influence in South Korea, it is only natural that South Koreans have favoured American English and adopted it as the standard of English language education that heavily relies on the academic system of the USA. American English and American college degree were, and still are, seen as the surest way to become successful in South Korea (Kim, J., 2015; Shin, 2007). The USA is undoubtedly perceived as a world leader; living like the Americans by speaking their language fluently, attending the world renowned American universities, and enjoying their culture are deemed as being successful which illustrate how American dream has a huge impact on South Koreans and those other nations affected by American power. Tu (1996) puts this dominance of American force simply; the

power the USA holds “perpetuat[es] the image of the United States as a future-oriented global intellectual leader in East Asian minds” (p. 9).

In 1995, the South Korean government launched a substantive globalisation project in hope of enhancing the country’s status in the international community through English language education (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). The emphasis put on globalisation by the government has influenced the national education policy since the tie between globalisation and English language has been considered to be inseparable; South Korean English language education has been reformed a number of times to meet new educational demands and needs from society (Choi, 2006). The importance of English language peaked during the massive financial crisis, known as the IMF period that severely hit the country in the late 1990s. The South Korean government saw the need to bring in international organisations and policies in order to restructure the 1997 financial disaster (Shin & Chang, 2000). According to Kim (2000) and Park (2009), those who took the active role of reforming the economy were the ones who could communicate globally using English and those people were seen as intelligent, successful, and talented assets. English has become the language to acquire to at least be a part of the so-called elite culture in South Korean society (Park & Abelman, 2004). These incidents show the power English language holds in this country is colossal, which naturally explains why it is considered as one of the most important subjects to study and master. English language playing a huge role in South Korean ‘education fever’ is thus explicable.

2.3.2 Power of American English on ‘Education Fever’

Uh, et al. (2012) state that South Korean mothers these days introduce English to their child before the baby is even born. As soon as they learn they are pregnant, the information gathering starts. They read English fairy tales, listen to English songs, and even reserve places at famous English kindergartens. Uh, et al. (2012) claim that this as a way to express

self-satisfaction whilst conforming to what the society deem as important; by gratifying themselves in doing something that is educational and beneficial to their child, even unborn, they are actually satiating what society demands.

As the United States established a strong presence in South Korea since the early 1950s in the military, political and economic arena, Korean people have experienced a rapid western form of modernisation which was seen as the equivalent to Westernisation. Western lifestyle and their wave of thoughts were mainly brought in by the United States. To South Koreans, in large, Westernisation meant Americanisation⁸ (Tu, 1996). This is not just the case of South Korea; cultural colonisation by American art, music and literature dominate the world and accelerated the expansion of English language (Pennycook, 2014; Mufwene, 2002). Rapid mobility of people, information, and knowledge, also has contributed in bringing the world closer in using English as a global language. English has been holding strong influential power in many societies across the world and this power positively affects those who have good command of the language in earning higher positions (Song, 2011; Park, J. K., 2009; Cheng, 2008). Particularly, the American brand of English is noticeably perceived as the ‘prestige varieties of [English] language’ (Milroy, 2001; Myers-Scotton, 1993) that holds a certain status that mainly signifies the power those who speak this version have.

⁸ There are terms explaining Western imperialism on culture, language, business, policies, and more; Americanisation, McDonaldisation, and Westernisation are the main terms generally used. Here, I use all three terms but with slightly different meanings.

- 1) Americanisation: this is a term used to describe the dominance of the US and its cultural power which heavily influence other countries. Americanisation has been widespread throughout the world due to Internet and web-based businesses and organisations. The dominance of American English has soared due to the power the US holds in the global arena. Though this term does not hold a negative vibe, critics are concerned about the predisposition this word holds (Rydell & Kroes, 2006).
- 2) McDonaldisation: coined by Ritzer (1993), it describes the principles of fast-food industries and how they dominate cultures by inducing societies to adapt to their system. Seen as a symbol of the American lifestyle, this concept has been brought into other countries by globalisation.
- 3) Westernisation: this term explains the adaptation of Western culture by other societies in areas that range from lifestyle, language, philosophy, economics, and much more (McLeish, 2013). Americanisation is a form of Westernisation.

When it comes to English language education, South Korean mothers are particularly sensitive to pronunciation and accent and believe that the earlier one starts to acquire or learn the language, he/she will be able to speak like a native speaker (Uh, et al., 2012). English is not seen as a foreign language anymore. It has become a shared global language and in many countries such as South Korea it has been treated as important as the first language, if not more (Song, 2011). Due to the wide spread of the English language, different varieties of Englishes are used and have been glocalised. These varieties of Englishes are being accepted across the globe these days however many still believe that American and/or British pronunciations and accents are the standard (Lee, 2014); developed Western countries speaking English as their mother tongue play a powerful role in the global stadium which influence people to think the ‘right’ way to speak English is to speak it like the Americans and/or the British (Song, 2011). Blommaert (2010) also highlights that global competition brings a “competitive market not just of English but of English accents” (p. 48) and concludes that “the object of globalized commodification is *accent* and not *language*” (p. 59). People striving to learn the American variety of English accent is soaring in numbers because of the power American English holds in the global community. Blommaert (2010) goes on to explain the reason for American English gaining such power by asserting that “a particular imagery of the USA and American cultural symbols... (are considered) ...as being in the forefront of globalisation and of upward mobility” (p. 49). This perception, I acknowledge, has resulted in ‘McDonaldisation’ (see p. 44 footnote 8) of the world which is “caught metonymically in packages for acquiring an American-sounding variety of English” (ibid).

Instead of acclimatising to the localised variety of English called ‘Konglish’, South Koreans are quite strict in receiving English; they would accept the authentic American version of English as legitimate English with huge emphasis on pronunciation and accent (Lee, 2011) which demonstrates people’s desire to move towards “prescriptive and elitist tendencies of the center” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 23) by using certain types of language varieties. In South

Korea, American version of the English language is evidently favoured and is a ‘must’ to gain membership into the ‘Kangam’ inner-circle (Lee, 2014). This is the reason why though more and more people are embracing the glocalisation of English language, the American and British English are still mainly sought after and are treated as the standard, authentic, and valuable forms. Furthermore, since it is believed that “language constitutes identity” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 70), good command of English in East Asia does boost one’s ego which affects one’s identity. By revealing his/her identity not only via the mother tongue but also through English, mothers implicitly hope that their children gain and/or maintain power using it to show social authority in this society (Lee, 2014; Uh, et al., 2012); the American accent does this precisely. Barthes (1957, cited in Blommaert, 2010) claims the American accent is seen as the accent of ‘bourgeoisie’. Though Barthes stated this in the late 1950s and it has been more than fifty years since, the idea still prevails, especially in South Korea. I would have to concur with Blommaert’s (2010) assertion that the American accent sells itself as “[if] you use it well, it helps you achieve the goals you have set in life: prosperity, success, happiness” (p. 56). English is the language used as a mother tongue for certain Western countries holding dominant global power and due to this factor, it is perceived as a classy language used by elites. Furthermore, Western cultural imperialism has added more value on the language as well. Accepting American accent means accepting “an image of America” (Blommaert, 2010, p. 22) which is what South Koreans are doing; they embrace American English and the image it brings to fulfil the American dream within the South Korean context.

The ‘education fever’ of South Korea has stirred up mothers to become ‘managers’ of their children’s educational journey due to the status quo of the society pushing people to adapt as quickly as possible into the era of limitless competition. In the middle of this educationally feverish turmoil lays English (Park, J. K., 2009; Park, S. Y., 2009; Shim & Park, 2008; Seth, 2002); holding the title of being the most important subject to master, English language education thus bears sway over the South Korean population. Parents are no longer heavily

relying on school programmes and they seek private cram schools, star tutors, and even move to English speaking countries for the sake of their children's English education (Yoo & Lee, 2006; Lee, 2005).

Consequently the amount of money poured into private English education has soared; this is a good example of depicting the pervasive nature of heated competition in South Korean society. 'Edu poor' is a relatively new term frequently being used by South Koreans; according to 'Analysis of the structure of domestic household spending on education' (한국경제연구원, 2013) by Hyundai Economic Research Institute (한국경제연구원), 'edu poor' are those who live in poverty due to excess amount of spending on children's education (2013). In 2011, there were around 824,000 households (this amounts to 13 percent of South Korean households spending money on children's education) in South Korea that were labelled as 'edu poor'. The 'edu poor' spend 28.5 percent of their expenditure to cover the educational costs. These people spent below average when it came to the basic expenses such as food, health, transportation and technology. They limited spending money on other necessities in order to spend it on education (Chun, 2012). KEDI (2014) has reported on the education fever of South Korea pointing out that in 2013, South Koreans spent 20 percent of their household income which amounts to 50 billion US dollars on private education (mostly after-school cram classes and private tutors) and the largest chunk went to English language education. This is how important English language education is to South Koreans. They do not hesitate to spend a fortune on mastering this prevailing global language. In Uh, et al.'s (2012) study, 77.5 percent of parents agreed that children's English ability is equally proportionate to the amount of money parents invest; the participants also said they would invest more in it if they could.

The 'English language fever' has derived from the attitude towards this language. Subsequently, this attitude has spread into organisations, institutions, schools, and even homes. Societal awareness of English as a critical device results in such perceptions that

burden people and their education. English has entered the Confucian society that values educational success as a virtue and has become a medium in driving the people to create a stricter nation governed by a new form of rigid class system. People living in this changing society study and learn English language in order to compete and gain higher position in the globalising world. As one of the major forces of globalisation, English language has literally become an essential asset to 'live'.

In the era of globalisation, Western values are rapidly and unceasingly brought into the Eastern world and vice versa through an important medium, the English language. Massive ideas and notions are introduced by mainly English due to its status as the dominant lingua franca. This greatly affects the dynamics of people's lives and naturally this language has been receiving the global spotlight. Fuelled by the current wave of globalisation, English language has become the most important and sought after language to master, both in name and reality. It has received great attention especially from mothers who are truly sensitive to issues that relate to their children's education (Lee, 2014); this phenomenon bears a sociolinguistic significance. This study investigates how English is re-enacted in local action by 'manager moms' through globalisation.

The impact of the English language through historical causes which are currently fuelled by globalisation is seen as one of the major reasons for the 'manager mom' phenomenon occurring in South Korea. Keen mothers have come to realise that the most effective and efficient way for their children to fit into this diverse, ever-changing global environment and maintain their socio-economic status is to master this international language (Pennycook, 2003). Perhaps 'manager moms' act as they do to give their children the opportunity to not only succeed within their own country but to be major players in the world. It is inevitable to turn attention outside a country's border for better opportunities as the world changes rapidly. Also, Western-educated 'manager moms' have various experiences and understandings of both East and West, they are capable of providing their children with different views of the

world that may drive them and their children to look outside their country and strive to succeed in a bigger realm, the global community (Lee, 2014). All in all, particular parts of the Sociolinguistics of Globalisation well explain ‘manager moms’ living in a globalising world trying hard to retain their status by feverishly holding onto the American version of the English language. Using the concept of the English language driving globalisation and/or vice versa, I try to capture the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon in the globalised South Korean context.

2.3.3 English: the Language of Globalisation

Globalisation is “an economic, an educational, a political, and a cultural phenomenon” (Watson, 2007, p. 252) that widens and strengthens “world links” (Stewart, 1996, p. 327); the notion of globalisation has increasingly spread since World War II and now it has become a crucial aspect of human activities nationally and internationally (ibid). Rapid social and economic changes largely brought in by globalisation have fuelled an intense interest in learning the English language (Hu & McKay, 2012). As one of the main drivers for globalisation, English language has been promoted as the dominant international language that accelerates “the internationalisation of many dimensions of life [including] economic relations, technology, ideology, and culture” (Stewart, 1996, p. 327).

Adapting, in particular, part of Blommaert’s (2010, 2003) work on language and globalisation which supports my argument on the English language affecting and reshaping different societies and the people living there using the language, I concentrate on how English as a foreign language changes the South Korean society. Blommaert (2010) highlights that due to the fast changing environment of this globalising world, the mobility of human language has shaped the discipline of sociolinguistics in a more complex direction. The impact of globalisation has resulted in setting a new platform for the study of language

and culture; Blommaert's and Pennycook's notions of *linguaculture*⁹ focus on increased mobility of people and languages and how this changes cultural politics of societies. My concentration is on the selection of the English language as a foreign and global language in the South Korean context. To understand what the English language means to South Koreans, especially mothers, and how it acts in a changing society; a strong presence of a dominant foreign language in a monolingual Confucian state indeed shapes people's identities and affects their lives (Park & Lo, 2012). How people and/or groups perceive and react to a foreign language change the status of this language; language plays a huge role in moving toward power and the inner-circle and people try to own that power by get to grips with the language. Pennycook (2007) precisely explains how English is perceived and how it relates to people in the era of globalisation: "English is closely tied to processes of globalization: a language of threat, desire, destruction and opportunity" (p. 5). Globalisation is extensively used as a lens to investigate various phenomena happening in the world due to the ubiquitous environment it holds control of (Coupland, 2013); it is also used in this study to enhance the conceptual factors influencing the 'manager mom' phenomenon of South Korea.

Globalisation is a commonly used term nowadays and it is not surprising that local communities are greatly influenced by global forces in constructing "a social, cultural, political and economic environment for themselves" (Blommaert, 2010, p. 23). Mainly due to the strong influence of Western market capitalism powered by globalisation, English is widely being used in various regions impacting different cultures (Coupland, 2003). Various local and historical conditions and environment are added in determining the function and power a language holds in community. Pennycook also discusses the impacts of globalisation on societies. He elaborates that globalisation "brings new forms of power" (2007, p. 30) alongside the dominant language which has brought yet another complexity in people's lives; now people not only need to learn and preferably master English language to

⁹ *Linguaculture*: A term coined by Paul Friedrich (1989) that discusses the relationship between language and culture. Culture is a source of conceptualising linguistic experience and explains the role of language.

be in a position where they can hold power to make a dent in this overly competitive world but also must accept different inequalities that this language brings with it. It changes the way people behave, talk, and perceive selves and others. It is, therefore, safe to argue that English “refashion[s] identities” (Pennycook, 2007, p. 6).

Cultural Linguistics explains that language is shaped and governed by cultural practices and at the same time, it represents culture since language is a main component that constitutes a culture (Palmer, 1996). Language is an asset that can be moulded into different shapes by the people who use it; depending on how it is valued in society, languages hold different statuses. Touching on the concept of Cultural Linguistics (Palmer, 1996), I investigated the perceptions of English as a global language from the viewpoints of South Korean mothers by understanding the relationship between this language and South Korean culture, way of perceiving the world through English, and how it is linked to the South Korean society, especially on how English language is entrenched as a ‘prestige variety of language’ (Milroy, 2001; Myers-Scotton, 1993). The power of English, which is one of the main aspects of globalisation, clearly shapes the hierarchy of the South Korean society.

South Koreans live in a society where the English language is packaged luxuriously and is portrayed as something very important. Blommaert (2010) asserts that “English means something different in different regions” (p. 152); it certainly means something indispensable to South Koreans. Since one’s language repertoire mirrors his/her life, it is only natural for mothers to devote themselves in supporting their children to master the global language. Globalisation undoubtedly has brought more competition and stronger education fever into the nation. It appears to lie at the core of the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon demanding and enforcing directions on mothers in educating their children. Adding to this, mothers’ multi-layered experiences, such as having studied abroad and/or having worked at foreign companies, affect their decisions and directions on how to teach, guide, support, and mentor their children’s English language education.

English language has already become a huge part of South Korean society; it is impossible to leave out English when discussing education, economy, politics, and social issues nowadays. The culturally constructed beliefs of people on education being the best way to succeed has steered South Korean mothers in leading new trends which has shaped this ‘manager mom’ phenomenon that is firmly tied to English language education in this global era. Song (2009) supports my stand by stating that one of the major fields that is massively affected by globalisation is education and in order to survive in such a competitive environment, learning and mastering English language is a popular and proven means to be singled out.

Looking from a sociolinguistics point of view, English has rapidly expanded its power through globalisation not only linguistically but in the cultural facets as well in the South Korean context. It even affects people’s daily conducts; the way they act, the words they choose to speak, and how they perceive the world around them are all influenced by globalisation and the English language used in order to deliver new knowledge (Song, 2011; Choi, 2002). Nowadays, people experience and realise that every moment of their lives are affected by various ideas and notion brought to them by the wave of globalisation no matter where they are; it is an undeniable fact that “[g]lobalisation is proving to be the salient context for an increasing number of local sociolinguistic experiences” (Coupland, 2003, p. 466). South Korea has been Americanised in many aspects due to the historical circumstances surrounding the nation since the 1950s (see 2.3.1). Due to the strong pro-American policies, the importance of English language, especially American English, has been accentuated in this particular country. It has further expanded and brought attention to the mass through the impact of globalisation. English has grown immensely as the supreme global language which influences not only the language education for most of the countries, if not all, but also the lives of the people with different language and cultural backgrounds. As for South Korea, there is no doubt that the English language has become the most important educational capital (Choi, 2010; Park, J. K., 2009).

In line with the Globalisation Project of 1995, the South Korean government lowered the age at which English should be taught in primary schools, introduced the TEE (Teach English in English) programme, and opened ‘English villages’ to promote English language education in the early 2000s (Choi, 2006; Kwon, 2000). In 2008, the Lee administration tried to implement English immersion education (teaching all subjects in English) with global prospects pouring in over one hundred and twenty million GBP (Kim, H. J., 2009). These top-down governmental policies have driven mothers to start English language education for their children as early as possible (Kim, M. J., 2009; Park, S. Y., 2009). Being an effective mechanism in education and employment, the English language has become an asset of society where the firmly embedded nature of competitiveness evokes the intense rivalry of the South Korean people. It should be emphasised that it was not only the governmental educational policies that has driven the country to become such an ‘English feverish’ state; the bottom-up demand from students and parents thirsting for a way to climb up the social ladder has met the government’s will to place the nation on the top of the global stage. In the middle of this journey towards the top stands English language education.

Uh, et al. (2012) call South Korea “the Republic of English Language” (p. 94) and assert that early English language education is a hot trend people blindly follow due to anxiousness which is driven by overheated competition. Furthermore, mastering a foreign language creates a ‘language ego’ which helps people to gain more confidence and see themselves as different in a positive way. Therefore, it is expected that by learning and conquering English language, a strong and beneficial ‘language ego’ will be created (ibid).

All these mentioned strongly relate to sociolinguistics of a society since these factors influence people and their lives, re/shape the language repertoires, and change the cultural habitus. Globalisation and the flow of its power are the main source in fuelling the linguistic changes locally and globally. I use this concept of globalisation affecting the statuses of

languages to support my discussion on how and why South Korean ‘manager moms’ dedicate their time and energy into planning, teaching, and learning the English language.

I have so far discussed the importance of the English language and the meaning it holds in South Korean society, I bring in the concept of lifelong learning of ‘manager moms’ to elaborate on the actions taken by these mothers to re/learn this dominant international language (see 2.5).

2.4 ‘Manager Moms’ of South Korea

Having discussed the main conceptions that influence the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon, analytical framework of South Korean ‘manager moms’ are presented in this sub-section. Based on the strong Korean Confucian values and the wave of globalisation influencing the South Korean society, this section elaborates on the formation of South Korean ‘manager moms’ by introducing the important roles they play and how they position themselves in society.

Many of the South Korean interviewees in this research and in Won & Pascall’s (2004) study associated their lives as ‘manager moms’ as being at “war” (p. 270). Every day these mothers constantly encounter moments when they have to make tough decisions for their children’s education. This is especially true when it comes to English language education since there is large amount of information on topics such as star tutors, better private academies and changes in curriculum. ‘Manager moms’ do their best to stay on top of this flood of information and pick out what is best for their children. Some mothers even go further to absorb this ‘important’ language by themselves so that they could be of help for their children’s study (Park & Abelman, 2004) and this “Mother Brand English” (p. 185) could be quite effective for young children (Yoo & Lee, 2006). I have witnessed rivalries

amongst these mothers on who is better at ‘managing’, while I was teaching in South Korea; mothers who hold the most valuable information and whose children are on top of the class are even idolised by other mothers. The world of ‘manager moms’ is full of competitions that forces mothers to be ‘superwomen’ (Kwak, 2002).

2.4.1 Role of South Korean Mothers

The sacrifice of mothers, in the South Korean context, does not just mean giving up their time and fortune for the sake of their children’s education, it is renouncing their career, which is a colossal part of one’s life. The male-dominated Confucian society presses women to be ‘good’ mothers by quitting their jobs and being ‘manager moms’ but at the same time expects them to act as an educated member of society by keeping their career to contribute to the society (Shim, 2001). The responsibility enforced upon women means numerous mothers in South Korea face a stifling dilemma.

I find the need to critically examine the meaning of mother’s instinctive love or maternal affection in order to deeply understand why mothers devote themselves so much to children’s education; there surely must be a link between maternal affection and their deeds. Beck-Gernsheim (2014) questions the concept of maternal affection as an instinct and claims that it is an invented notion brought into society by industrialisation. This notion is supported by societal changes that have affected the family institution which, in turn, has led to how women, especially mothers, are perceived in society (Ireland, 1993; Gerson, 1985). The tension between motherhood and women’s lives as individual beings should be understood to further investigate the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon. I employ Beck-Gernsheim’s (2014) concept of the invented motherly affection and apply it to the South Korean ‘manager mom’ model.

As South Korean women become mothers, the major portion of their lives is spent devoted to their children's education. This devotion sometimes leads to abandoning one's ego and/or identity as an individual since once all energy is poured into her children, she would not have anything left for herself (Ireland, 1993). This brings out the issue of giving up a huge piece of her life as an individual in order to be a committed, affectionate mother. In line with Beck-Gernsheim's concept of invented maternal affection, South Korean mothers have conceived their own version of it on the basis of Korean Confucian values. Cultural contradiction on roles of male and female stem from ethnic practices, social structure, and beliefs and these forces have brought 'intensive mothering' in order to successfully fulfil the assigned responsibilities (Hays, 1998). The cultural power plays a substantial role on the notion of motherhood which comprises the subordinate position of women in society (Thomson, et al., 2011; Hays, 1998). This leads to shaping of maternal identity through 'common culture' (Thomson, et al., 2011, p. 8). The dichotomised roles assigned by the cultural convention to male and female have largely influenced women to become unnoticeable beings who are always there ready to support and sacrifice for the family (Cho, 1998; Park & Cho, 1995). The cultural norm of women playing a supportive role has helped in shaping and re-shaping the South Korean version of maternal affection; the strong affection towards her children and their education gives her a place to stand and offers her a unique power where her role has been limited to household chores. This is why, for women, their children have become assets to secure a stable position in the household as well as in society; this power has become a reason for being. It can be argued that the strong bond and affection South Korean mothers hold towards their children, therefore, is indeed an invented notion of affection that mirrors the Confucian values embedded in their belief system.

Modernisation has brought capitalist laws that work the market in South Korean society and with it came a chance for women to voice out their opinion. In the midst of this societal transformation, children's education was seen as a good 'working area' for women, to show and have a say in what they want from society. Mothers have actively taken on this role of

managing children's education. Beck-Gernsheim (2014) remarks that, by grabbing onto this role, women's maternal affection, which was thought to be a disposition, an intrinsic value, was 'invented'. This newly invented motherhood became a career for mothers and women have been pressed in to carry out the responsibility of being devoted mothers (Lee, 2011). I acknowledge the fact that Beck-Gernsheim's concept is based on the contemporary German context nevertheless I trust it applies to other societies going through similar changes and challenges. This issue is still ongoing not only in Germany but many other societies that face the same problem and South Korea is one of those countries. Thus, this is not only about German women but it mirrors women in general, including South Korean mothers.

The wave of globalisation not only brought in the opportunity for women to hold certain power over children's education, but it has also influenced women's education and the feminist movement which gave them the chance to think about their lives and the value of working outside the household; they encountered new possibilities and opportunities at the work place and learned that they have rights in society where their voices could be heard (Ireland, 1993). Through this progression, they have faced the conflict between being an individual and being a mother and this endless conflict persists till now tormenting women. At the same time, advanced industrialisation has changed the flow of child education; with the development of medicine, psychology, and educational studies children became beings who should be shaped by parents' effort (Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). Though women have earned their rights in society to work and be treated as equal individuals, they still have not safeguarded their position as strongly as men and this unstable feeling has affected women to secure their unwavering asset, their children, to position themselves not only at home but also in society. Having power over raising and educating their children has assured women their unique position and presence. Their children as a medium, women have gained certain control and authority in society, especially those from Confucian countries where women have been regarded as shadows of men. Women have constantly negotiated between being themselves and being mothers (Hays, 1998); the interesting fact is that they still would put

‘responsibility as a mother’ at the heart of everything and adjust individual desires around this (Lee, 2011). Does this signify their motherly affection or is the society pressing them to act in this way? Is it really women’s disposition and their special mission to dedicate everything to children’s education? (ibid) The ‘mother’ title brings forward an opportunity for mothers to secure their own position however at the same time it may burden them and affect the formation of their identities. The construction of maternal identity involves restructuring their previous selves which always brings about tension and challenges (Duarte & Gonçalves, 2007). In order to cover up their feelings of conflict, they may have accepted their children as their alter ego and preoccupy their minds in managing children’s education.

The question posed by Beck-Gernsheim (2014), Lee (2011), and Hays (1998) on understanding motherhood and maternal affection gives a chance to critically think whether there truly is room for self-improvement for mothers when dedicating their lives for the sake of others (children) by holding onto the ‘managing’ role society has assigned to them. The social tension on the “cultural model of motherly affection” (Hays, 1998, p. 22) which is a contemporary version of “socially appropriate mothering” (ibid, p. 13) intensifies the action mothers take for their children and tends to define what maternal affection means. Sikes (1997) supports this notion by stating motherhood is indeed a social construct since the meaning largely depends on “what is going on in the particular contexts in which (it is) enacted” (p. 11). Hays (1998) asks what is it that these mothers are devoted to; social pressure, self-interest, power, and love are what she brings up in an attempt to answer this question. I aim to draw out answers for these questions in the South Korean context by understanding mothers.

2.4.2 Social Position of South Korean ‘Manager Moms’

Though they have been given the opportunity to go outside and have a career, ironically women’s lives have been more constrained than ever in the household due to children’s

education. These days, South Korean mothers live in a child-oriented society and their common goal is to provide their children with the best educational support possible (Lee, 2011).

There are numerous South Korean women living their lives as ‘manager moms’ leaving their career to take care of children’s education on behalf of the family name (Kim, 2006; Cho, 2005). The interesting point here is that as society develops, in order to maintain their status and power in society, the middle class, the bourgeoisie, tries to keep this conception of gender split and people from the lower social class are apt to accept and follow this (Beck-Gernsheim, 2014; Lee, 2011). Societal pressure that has limited women’s activities to family matters has brought the fierce management of education by educated mothers to safeguard their ego and identities; by presenting themselves as mothers and veiling their individual selves, they have found a ground where they can firmly stand. I see this as a survival game; women are fiercely yet calmly acting to gain recognition. In line with this, Uh, et al. (2012) affirm that many mothers are looking at their children but are not actually looking into them since they are too occupied with educating their assets that secure their position.

For South Korean mothers, succeeding as a mother is more important than attaining distinction in their careers (Lee, 2011; Kim, 2006); obligation towards their family, especially their children, comes before individual needs which are constructed by old Korean Confucian values. Their responsibility as mothers comes before other duties they hold due to the societal norms governed by the prevailing philosophy. Identifying and presenting themselves as mothers who have successfully raised their children as model students excelling in their studies, mothers gain recognition in society and are praised by others (Kim, S. H., 2013; 2006); these mothers hold a special position in South Korea. They are seen as model mothers and are widely respected. This shapes the identity of South Korean women, specifically mothers, from being subordinates of men to someone who stand out and can claim their achievement.

Interestingly, Ashton-James, et al. (2013) argue that mothers who are overzealous of children's education are not just a reflection of society and its belief but it is due to their distrust of themselves and their children. What Ashton-James, et al. are saying here is that if mothers give full trust to the doings of their children and expect them to grow as they hope then children will not let parents down. Idealistically, this could be right however living in society where people are affected deeply by how they are governed and how they create relationships with others, this conception of educating children may not be taken seriously. In the case of South Korea, I believe, it is not about trust or distrust; it is about the national philosophy and the common mentality, the Korean mentality, rooted in society for ages by Confucian ideals combined with globalised competition that has shaped this phenomenon.

With their unique identity as South Korean 'manager moms', they place themselves at a distinct position in society where educational performance means so much. The position of South Korean mothers is a concern that stretches from individuals to the whole society. The massive power women hold behind the scene when it comes to managing children's education, constructs an important position for them at home, in society, and across nations (Robinson, 1994).

2.4.3 Academically Driven Mothers in Different Contexts

In this sub-section, I introduce similar yet different 'manager mom' phenomenon happening in various societies. The 'manager mom' phenomenon has been generated in South Korean local settings strongly influenced by the traditional culture yet I stress that it has resulted from both internal and external factors; stimulated by the current wave of globalisation, the external forces are brought in and are adapted to the local environment where internally induced values reflect the ethnic context and at the same time, these values shaped in a local setting are shared and practised in other parts of the world. I concentrate on East Asian

countries such as China, Japan, and Singapore since they share similar cultural traits under the Confucian philosophy (Choi & Lee, 2008). These countries also are “important players in the global spread of English because of the great inroads that English has made into their educational systems” (Hu & McKay, 2012, p. 345).

2.4.3.1 Asian-American Tiger Moms

In February 2015, a sitcom titled ‘*Fresh off the Boat*’ was aired (American Broadcasting Company) in the USA. It became a hot topic since the story was based on an academically driven East Asian family living in the States. In order to display a typical East Asian family, the mother character was depicted as a ‘tiger mom’; a mother who educates her children using a strict, disciplined method to force them to succeed academically by drilling them to study hard. This method is used widely in Confucian cultures such as China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Taiwan. The success of this sitcom signifies people’s interest in East Asian way of living including their methods of education.

Though East Asian parenting styles share similar traits, I want to point out and clarify that there are differences when it comes to ‘tiger moms’ and ‘manager moms’. According to Shin (2012), ‘love’, ‘sacrifice’, and ‘gratefulness’ were the most common words South Korean college students elicited when they were asked to think of their mothers. ‘Sacrifice’ was what caught Shin’s attention; he argues that this is unique to South Koreans. Numerous South Korean mothers sacrifice their time and even their careers to stay at home for their children; this has been practised widely and interestingly children also acknowledge this as their mother ‘sacrificing’ for them (Lee, 2011). Mothers themselves also believe that “to be a good mom, you need to sacrifice yourself” (You & McGraw, 2011, p. 592).

It is this ‘sacrifice’, which is more intense than ‘devotion’ in the Korean language that differentiates the famous Asian-American ‘tiger mom’ to the South Korean ‘manager mom’.

This ‘tiger mom’ craze hit the United States when Amy Chua, a Chinese-American, who is a professor at Yale University, wrote a book titled, *The Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011). The ‘tiger mom’ story has stirred the world by depicting an exceedingly strict East Asian¹⁰ way of educating children which racialized educational encounters (Lui & Rollock, 2013). This book was received with criticism yet at the same time gave a different view on how East Asian parents bring up their children successfully, at least academically. I believe somehow that her way of educating her children suited her situation as an Asian-American mother, who holds a prominent position in her career and has supposedly succeeded in life largely due to the strict education received by her parents, in the eye of the Asian population. ‘Tiger mom’ does largely reflect certain aspects of the stringent way of East Asian teaching. However, the fact that Chua is an American and this book was written in the United States cannot be disregarded. I see tiger mom’s disciplinary method as an acculturation of East Asian values into the American life style, especially in Amy Chua’s case; through the Western culture and English language, Confucian doctrine that represents East Asian morals and principles is blended into Asian-Americans’ lives.

My approach to South Korean ‘manager moms’ has different connotations within this area; I examined the ‘manager moms’ issue from a different angle, in a different cultural context, and in a particular subject area: English as a foreign language. My focus is not on teaching and raising their children using certain East Asian methods but on how all these have an impact on mothers themselves; I emphasise on understanding what they get out of this strenuous job ‘managing’ their children as well as the meaning of their short-lived lifelong learning practice and how all these factors influence their lives.

¹⁰ East Asian: I acknowledge that the terms ‘Asian’/‘Asians’ are used differently around the world and to make it clear, in this thesis, ‘East Asian’ refers to people born and living in the eastern sub region of the Asian continent which includes countries such as China, Korea, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan. These countries share similar cultural characteristics based on Confucian principles (source from: “East Asia”. encarta. Microsoft. Archived from the original on 2009-10-31. "The countries, territories, and regions of China, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Macau, and Taiwan.").

Chua, while educating her children, has not given up on anything of her own life; she has kept her job and busied herself with her life which is ever so different compared to the South Korean ‘manager moms’ who renounce their future wholly as career women just for their children’s education. It seems that it is not only out of maternal duty but there is more to these mothers being entirely devoted specifically to education.

Chua elaborates that she has educated her children in the strict East Asian way she herself was brought up by (Chua, 2011). Nevertheless, it is inevitable that she herself does have the Western values firmly embedded in her actions due to being American; her parents spoke Chinese to her when disciplining her while she speaks English with her daughters all the time. Even though Chua says she has educated her children the same way she was brought up by her own Chinese parents, the generational difference, the language, the person, and the multicultural situation are all different, as she admits (Lum, 2011). Lui & Rollock (2013) emphasise that Chua’s story captures part of the East Asian value of “Asian culturally specific parenting practices designed to raise highly competent offspring” (p. 455). I agree to some extent, however, Chua’s concept of ‘tiger mom’ does not go into the core of the phenomenon that I am trying to examine.

2.4.3.2 Various Types of ‘Manager Moms’ of East Asia

It is impossible to leave out the Chinese ‘tiger moms’ in the discussion of East Asian mothers. As a nation where Confucianism originated from, Chinese society still functions on the basis of Confucian teachings (Moise, 2013). Amy Chua’s version of ‘tiger mom’ also has come from the Chinese educational context. Again, I must mention that though Chua’s notion of ‘tiger mom’ is indeed from the Chinese context, it is hard to deny the fact that it has been modified somehow to fit it into the American setting she grew up and is living in. Whether it be the Chinese version or the modified American version, the ‘tiger mom’ syndrome astonished the educational world. It has been criticised for the strict methods and

treatments towards educating children, however it is still credited hugely in East Asia as an effective and efficient way to bring up educationally successful children (Fu & Markus, 2014). The one child policy of China has led the people to concentrate more on their only child in a lot of ways (Fong, 2004); their devotion towards their child's education has driven Chinese society to be acknowledged as one of the fiercest 'education feverish' states in the world.

In Japan, there are 'koyoiku mamas' who are obsessed with their children's education and drive their children to be scholastically successful which leads to professional success later on (Uno, 1999). Uno describes that in Japan, mothers who continue on with their careers are commonly depicted as being selfish and as mothers they are obligated to take responsibility towards children's education. This stresses the children, the mother themselves, and the society. Yet it continues on as a dominant social phenomenon mainly seen in the middle-class families (Chiavacci, 2008; Lebra, 1998). The difference I see here in the case of Japan is that 'koyoiku mama' is still a middle-class phenomenon whereas the South Korean 'manager mom' started out as a middle-class model but now is seen everywhere in South Korea (Lee, 2011). Also, unlike South Korea where children are seen as the core of the extended family expected to uphold the family name and value by succeeding academically, in Japan, they put more emphasis on the individual child to be loyal to the country through education (Hwang, 1999; Hall & Xu, 1990). Therefore, the aspects of putting emphasis on education are similar but when it comes to the centre of the phenomenon, there exists a difference. South Korean mothers manage children's education for the family and by doing so gain their special position within the family hierarchy whilst Japanese mothers focus on their children as individuals. This does not mean that Japanese Confucianism rejects the idea of extended family or that the Korean Confucianism neglects loyalty; the point made here is that the focus of Korean Confucianism and that of Japan are different, which is shown through education. Adding to this, Hu & McKay (2012) states that Japanese English language education "do not seem to be intertwined" (p. 355) with issues of social class

which leads to the reason why they do not spend much on English language education as South Koreans (Mikio, 2008).

Singapore's 'study mothers' are mainly mothers from different countries such as China and South Korea who accompany their children and come to Singapore for purely educational reasons (Huang & Yeoh, 2005). Singapore has a number of world renowned international schools where teaching and learning is done in English (Park & Bae, 2009); this attracts zealous mothers to bring their children to Singapore. These 'study mothers' have become an important social phenomenon since the early 2000s which have influenced the local Singaporean mothers to take similar actions.

I do not wish to differentiate the reasons why these mothers sacrifice themselves for their children's education; due to similar philosophical background and cultural resemblances, it is little wonder that a phenomenon akin to South Korean 'manager moms' exist in these societies. The distinctions that I emphasise are on the actions these mothers take and the result coming out of those actions. When it comes to South Korean 'manager moms', they not only 'sacrifice' their time, energy, and money into their children's education but it is the way they immerse themselves in education; the lifelong learning approach they take results in their own development as individuals and the result of this action leads them to a special position in South Korean society.

2.4.3.3 East Asian 'Education Fever' and Mothers behind the Scene

In numerous league tables and international assessments, East Asian countries indeed stand out at the top (OECD, 2013; Leung, 2006). One has to ask why; what is it about the East Asian countries? Has it to do with the shared philosophical background? Is it the structure of these societies? Is it based on historical aspects? I bring back the 'manager mom' phenomenon of South Korea to substitute it to other East Asian cultures to verify this not

only fits into the South Korean context but into other environments as well, albeit a bit different due to their own ethnic uniqueness. In other Confucian countries such as China, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore, it is not difficult to find a similar phenomenon happening (Seth, 2002); they place great emphasis on education and consequentially have their own versions of ‘manager moms’ and geese families (see 2.4.4). Most of these countries are already seen as advanced countries or are developing fast as economic powerhouses. On the global stage, people from these countries are portrayed as hard workers who have gone through the feverish educational journey to survive and by doing so, better the country (Rozman, 2014; Leung, 2002; Seth, 2002). The majority of the East Asian parents act upon ‘education fever’ and owing to this phenomenon, East Asian societies are changing rapidly; parents move around a lot to find better environment for children’s education and many of them leave their own countries and devote their time, energy, and money to do so. This re/shapes and re/structures the nation and people’s lives; it also greatly influences the language people use and prioritise. People are proud their hard work has brought the country to a recognisable level on the global stage and this Asian pride holds them to endure the hectic educational journey (Tu, 1996); it is apparent that devoted mothers are the major players behind the educational feverish state of East Asian societies.

Seth (2002) elaborates that a majority of South Korean parents would not hesitate spending their pension funds or selling their houses for education and similar symptoms have been appearing in other Asian countries such as China, Japan and Taiwan. Adding to this, Kipnis (2011) discusses the intense education fever in China and points out that even the poor would take out a loan to invest in their child’s education since they feel the pressure and societal expectations placed upon them. This heavy duty, which is rooted in Confucian ideology of placing importance on education, not only presses parents but the children. In most cases, Asian cultural norms emphasise the importance of standing out and being superior to their peers and leads them to study hard which, in many cases, cause depression and/or fear (Cho, 2010). East Asian children are brought up to think that their achievements

not only affect their own lives but at the same time, determine their family's future and the nation's; it is not surprising then for them to strive for the best not to disappoint family and society. It is credible to claim Confucianism is the main reason for East Asia's 'education fever'; the core phenomenon in question here is clearly shown in these countries in a similar form with different names (Chao & Tseng, 2002). Regardless of their financial, educational, and social background, South Korean parents, especially mothers, do not hesitate to self-sacrifice themselves for the sake of their children's education which stems from their unique cultural tradition of ardently practising collective familism (Kim & Choi, 1994).

2.4.4 Geese Families: A Social Problem or an Educational Adventure?

Numerous South Korean parents decide to take a step further for their children's education. Leaving the father alone in South Korea since he needs to work and financially support his family, the mother takes the children abroad to an English speaking country in hopes of providing a better environment for their children to master the language (Park & Lo, 2012; Kim, J., 2010; Lee, H., 2010; Kang, 2009; Lee & Koo, 2006); these transnational families split across oceans are called 'geese families'. This lifestyle has become a trend and at the same time a social issue due to family members living apart for a long time. In so doing, 'manager moms' have taken a more aggressive role in planning the future of their family around children's education. South Korean parents realise this endeavour could be risky due to physical separation and lack of communication yet still they accept to take this risk. For individual families, this is seen as an educational adventure to fulfil their duties as parents and as filial children which has become a family strategy to kill two birds with one stone in the age of globalisation (Lee & Koo, 2006). Again, sacrifice comes into the picture; now here, South Korean parents sacrifice not only their careers, time, and money, but they also give up the joy and comfort of staying together as a family for one purpose; this "ironic form of family that sacrifices the togetherness of a family" (Kim, J., 2010, p. 271) strongly

supports the discussion of the 'education fever' and furthermore backs up the power English language holds in South Korea "as a critical asset of occupational mobility" (Lee & Koo, 2006, p. 533).

Geese mothers go through inevitable transformation living in foreign countries (Lee, H., 2010); adding to their status as mothers, they also act as father-figures for their children and become more independent supporting the children and themselves. The bond between herself and her children as well as the relationship with her husband back home inevitably changes; these changes affect her status and identity in a complex manner. Lee, H. (2010) claims this identity change in geese mothers strongly influences their position in family and states that living as geese families "is not only a matter of choice in life, but can also be a vehicle for a powerful life in transformation" (p. 250) to all family members.

Through their linguistic investments, parents expect their children to acquire a mastery of the English language as well as gain transnational experiences to enhance their position once they are back in South Korea. Kang (2009) and Park & Bae (2009) support this notion by asserting that this 'goose family' phenomenon demonstrates the negotiation and tensions families go through in order to use this background of transnational education to place their family in a better position. The familial aspiration and the societal pressure to "globalise their children" (Kang & Abelmann, 2011, p. 89) enhance the phenomenon.

This traditional Confucian notion of family and motherhood has taken a turn in the globalising world and has bred new types of social phenomena such as the emergence of 'manager moms'. The Confucian value of familism South Koreans practice encourages them to actively respond to the challenges of the diverse educational conditions. Though they are apart in different countries, this strong belief of collective familism tightly holds the members and geese mothers are at the core of managing this "dynamic interactive nature of the family" (Kang, 2009, p. 205). It seems ironic that people living and breathing the Confucian values which put family in the middle of everything, actually split, though just for

a while, in order to fulfil an even bigger goal for the whole family; raising academically successful children to honour the family name and accomplish their desire to stand out in the performative society. Evidently, “[t]his form of educational migration is... a direct response to the intense competition in Korean society” (Park & Lo, 2012, p. 149).

2.5 Lifelong Learning of South Korean ‘Manager Moms’

While investigating ‘manager moms’, my attention was drawn to mothers’ self-managed education, which could be categorised as a branch of adult education within the framework of lifelong learning. The self-directed learning of these mothers is predominantly a distinctive version of lifelong learning in terms of the learning period and purpose; the mother participants were re-learning English language for a short period of time for their children’s education. This phenomenon is happening amongst mothers in the era of globalisation where ‘learning to be’ (UNESCO, 1972) is considered a must. For these mothers, this self-managed education is deemed as a necessity to accomplish their goal and therefore should be considered significant. To tie the notions of Korean Confucianism and the significance of English language education in with the actions and approaches taken by South Korean ‘manager moms’, I employ Lave & Wenger’ (1991) Situated Learning Theory to enlighten the discussion on these women’s lifelong learning in a particular context.

2.5.1 ‘Situated Learning’ within the Context of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning encompasses voluntary and self-directed pursuit of learning from cradle to grave; it includes all sorts of education people take throughout the whole of their lives (Aspin & Chapman, 2001; OECD, 1996). Learning continuously takes place with or

without knowing in order to change, grow, and better one's life. Yet learning is largely perceived as a boring and difficult task one has to go through to settle well in society.

Many countries have paid keen attention to their education systems and have tried to reform and develop the structure to catch up with the ever changing world and in the 1970s the ideology of lifelong learning began to be propagated earnestly by international organisations such as UNESCO and OECD (Field, 2001). Paul Lengrand, one of the pioneers in adult education, defines lifelong education as integrated education for individuals and society from birth till death (UNESCO, 1972). He expounds on the importance of learning stressing it should not stop after formal education and needs to continue on in order to enhance and reinforce society utilising the educational asset efficiently.

Lifelong learning has become a critical part of education and has developed into a prominent field since the 21st century (Johnson, 2000). The meaning of lifelong learning has transformed and now the focus has shifted towards accommodating individual needs, fragmenting the forms of education that is “just for you” (Newby, 2000, p. 44). Lifelong learning has been perceived as something people turn to when more training in workplaces is needed. This view is also changing; lifelong learning encompasses the right to learn that ranges over any type of education. I draw on Hughes' (2000) view to support the vital role lifelong learning plays in people's lives:

[I]t is important that it (lifelong learning) should move beyond mere adaptation to work. It should become part of the broader concept of education, pursued throughout life, the precondition for the harmonious and continuous development of the individual(p. 60).

The discourse of lifelong learning accommodates space for a variety of concepts since new ideas and learning fit well into its loose boundary which is the reason why I bring in ‘manager moms’ and their self-directed learning into discussion within this area.

Yang (2003) stresses that adult education is mainly based upon social interactions situated within cultural contexts. This claim supports my view of South Korean mothers' lifelong

learning; due to the expectations of society, they push themselves to know more and learn more. The cultural norm and the environment they are in constructs perceptions of people and the perceptions society has towards mothers drive them to learn. This brings the discussion of manager mothers' lifelong learning to the 'Situated Learning Theory'. Originated by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), this theory explains the relationship between learning and the social situation in which it occurs, where the focus is on learning in a community of practice. Lave & Wenger (1991) claim that learning is a social process and the knowledge created during such processes is co-constructed. Situated learning occurs in a specific context and is rooted in the social environment that affects the learning. Learning is a process of enculturating the learner into the community of practice by speaking and the same language sharing similar experiences (Contu & Willmott, 2003). This is how a person positions him/herself in their world which explains how 'manager moms' act amongst themselves; they bond with one another and form learning networks (Koper & Tattersall, 2004) by sharing comparable stories and knowledge and taking similar actions toward their children's educational endeavour which includes empowering themselves through lifelong learning as well as shaping their identities (Bolhuis, 2003).

Informal group learning can be very effective especially for adults whose complex interaction with the situation and settings influence the whole of their learning process. When it comes to learning and teaching English as a foreign language informally, the understanding mothers have and the means that children discover from the same text could complement each other (Shin, 2015; Uh, et al., 2012). To create this atmosphere where mother and child both produce synergy in learning and teaching, mothers try to learn more and gain expertise collaborating with one another through group meetings and community practices which often lead to their lifelong learning. Through lifelong learning, they gain emotional support which stimulates the learning process (Bolhuis, 2003).

‘Manager moms’ and their willingness to learn more not just individually but as a group with those who share similar background fits well with Lave & Wenger’s (1991) theory on learning happening based on the situated context. By learning together mothers create forms of social co-participation and build up the need to understand the societal context that this type of learning is taking place; “the situation and circumstances [they are put in] constitutes basis for understanding these activities” (Billett, 1996, p. 263) they are engaged in. The shared experience ‘manager moms’ have opens up possibilities for new ideas and by putting themselves to learn and/or re-learn, they seek different ways to develop themselves as a true manager for their children’s education. La Belle’s (1982) claim also support this discussion; engaging in lifelong learning “reinforce a network of individuals whose social and cultural background is often held in common” (p. 167).

2.5.2 A Different Perspective: Truncated Lifelong Learning

In the 1970s, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO proposed tasks for the South Korean lifelong learning sector and elaborated the importance of developing education for adults (Bae, 2009). In 1980, the South Korean Constitution added an article to its body putting that the nation should promote lifelong education which consequently brought attention to this field (Bae, 2003). In South Korea, lifelong learning “became a popular policy slogan in the 1990s in the context of globalisation, the aging society, and the rise of new information technology” (Kang, 2007, pp. 206-207) and has continued to grow as a vital part of education to develop individuals and society.

Under governmental support and societal demand, South Korean lifelong education has been developing well quantitatively due to growing demand and it is evaluated that the quality of supply has been on track as well (Choi, 2004). However, the concept of lifelong learning has been limited to providing practical training for job seekers, continuous support for

workers or to provide opportunities to engage in enhancing hobbies of the older generation (ibid). The attention should be focused towards new areas of lifelong learning and at the same time enhance the quality of education provided. Self-directed learning of ‘manager moms’ can be categorised as adult education specifically geared towards mothers who are in need of community support. Lifelong learning should be in the middle of adult learning providing education that suits specific needs of individuals and groups; thus, the lifelong learning community should look into the requests of certain groups such as ‘manager moms’ who hold a crucial position in the field of education. Ideology of lifelong learning could change according to system, institution, and law since it is such a dynamic area; nothing is static when it comes to education and adult education could be even more flexible since the majority of learning occurs in non-formal and informal ways (La Belle, 1982). Lifelong learning should pay attention to meeting the demands of people and changing for the better, in this case, the needs of ‘manager moms’.

Smith (1986) brings out the issue that many lifelong learners face; due to certain preconceived ideas on lifelong learning:

Education, in many forms and circumstances, is society’s best hope for stimulating and bringing about the changes that improve the quality of human life. And yet, adults who attempt to continue their education and training generally find a frustrating absence of any coherent, coordinated learning system to meet their purposes (p. 98).

Stereotypes on lifelong learning as being a narrow area in which to serve the elderly should be dismissed (Choi, 2004) so learning in any situation could permeate into the lives of everyone. The world we live in is an intricate place where differences exist in all stages of human lives. Different cultures and beliefs govern the way of learning and therefore the process and content of lifelong education in different countries cannot be the same. There are numerous programmes and projects being carried out under the name of lifelong education (Shin, 2014). Short-term, self-directed learning of South Korean ‘manager moms’ should be understood as one of these different yet unique and important phenomenon that lifelong learning ought to embrace in order to enhance society and its members. All the

process included and applied towards adults' education regardless of the content, level, method, and formality is lifelong learning (Tuijnman & Boström, 2002; Delors, 1996). Whether formal or informal, the ways South Korean mothers are educating themselves should be understood as a branch of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning itself is an ever-growing, developing, and changing system that should suit the taste of the people who sustain the nation and society.

It is ironic that lifelong learning can include a 'truncated' version yet it is valid to call this short-term learning mothers are taking up as a unique form of lifelong learning which is commonly witnessed in South Korea. Whether they are learning and educating themselves for a short period of time for their children or studying for their own development, it is a form of lifelong learning. The significance of this truncated lifelong learning of South Korean mothers should be discussed and dealt with since it is not only closely related to children's education but also brings meaning into the field of adult education.

These mothers motivate themselves by enthusiastically participating in lifelong learning activities; they manage their learning by setting own learning goals and try hard to maintain their motivation in hopes of accomplishing outcomes they have hoped for (Garrison, 1997). The strong motivation to assist their children and be 'successful manager moms' "leads to responsible and continuous learning" (ibid, p. 29). Processes of managing their children's education affect mothers in their own learning endeavour within the context of self-directed lifelong learning whether it is intended or not. The lifelong learning of these mothers holds positive aspects; by learning to help their children, mothers themselves acquire know-how and come up with effective new methods (Shin, 2015). They become more competent and capable in guiding, coaching, and teaching, which could be used for the community through various volunteer works such as being a mentor for other mothers, counsellor for students, and/or study coach for children who need help (Walters, 1997). Mothers who have received help from the community through organisations that offer lifelong learning classes or

materials are willing to give back if the system supports these activities (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2011).

Behind the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon, there is lifelong learning that holds these passionate mothers to be effective managers. As a mother living in a hierarchical society where a competitive atmosphere dominates, one has to make a tough decision; many women choose to manage their children’s education over carrying on with their careers and they want to do it the best way possible. Henceforth, they put themselves in a serious study mode; they re-learn subjects their children are learning in order to be a true ‘manager’ (Shin, 2015). Lifelong learning has become a fundamental factor in becoming a ‘manager mom’ and has also played a meaningful role in transforming the way women view themselves (Walters, 1997).

Lifelong learning is a social activity that contributes to cultural, social, and global aspects of human lives (Brookfield, 1993). According to Schuller & Field (2006) and Aspin & Chapman (2001), lifelong learning is a public good which benefits society as a whole. It is a social capital each society should try their best to keep improving. Lifelong learning of women, especially mothers, in the male-dominant context should be critically examined not only for children’s education but also for mothers’ self-development and empowerment (Kwak, 2002).

2.6 Overview of the Research Framework

A research framework is crucial since it shapes questions and connects the research to particular concepts related to a given phenomenon by systematising the theoretical structure (Anfara, Jr., & Mertz, 2014; Maxwell, 2012). I elaborate on the framework of this study by combining the three main concepts introduced and discussed in this chapter: the dominant

philosophy of South Korea, the notion of globalisation that fuels and enhances the English language education, and the lifelong learning of South Korean ‘manager moms’. By bringing all these conceptions together as the research framework, I aim to provide the foundation to this study. The theoretical context must be discussed since it is the backbone of this study conceptualising the notions of social and global factors shaping the phenomenon. By drawing on and linking relevant concepts and theories, I support and justify the claims made for this piece of research.

The research framework that guides this study is based on the importance of the English language in South Korea enhanced by globalisation, East Asian philosophical doctrine of Confucianism, and the dynamic lifelong learning approaches these mothers take in order to achieve their goal. The coexisting force of these underlying principles has created a new version of hyperactive motherhood or a maternal image that plays a massive role in shaping the South Korean society hugging the notion of the educational power mothers hold and how they manipulate that power to position themselves. The power South Korean mothers exercise in the educational realm has not only changed their status in society but it has also influenced the South Korean sociolinguistics, especially in acquiring/learning the dominant foreign language, English. Since this study of South Korean ‘manager moms’ aim to explore their lives under the context of South Korea and how this particular society view the English language, I see this falling under the field of sociolinguistics. To deeply engage with this topic of English as a foreign language affecting the linguistic landscape of South Korea, I embraced a part of Blommaert’s concept of Sociolinguistics of Globalisation (see 2.3.3) as a research framework to discuss English language and globalisation alongside Korean Confucianism which provides the philosophical background.

The old Koreanised Confucian principles that have guided the moral of South Koreans has met the dynamics of a rapidly changing world and keen mothers who recognise the changes taking place have reacted to them by forming a motherhood that stands out in society as

active, zealous and devoted figures called ‘manger moms’. ‘Manager moms’, who hold power in supervising South Korea’s education, construct their own image as passionate women and position themselves in society with unique and dynamic forces; these women are the driving force behind in promoting English language into a special status in South Korean society (Kim, S. H., 2013; 2006). The importance of English language education is strongly embraced by globalisation affecting these mothers to dedicate their time and energy into a unique form of lifelong learning. Whether English drives globalisation or globalisation fuels English usage, either way it is unmanageable to leave both concepts out when discussing the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon.

Capturing a part of discussion on the notion of Sociolinguistics of Globalisation that explicates how language changes in a changing society (Blommaert, 2010), I concentrate on the importance of foreign language, particularly English here, and its changing status in the South Korean society as to how this affects the people and the cultural legacy through examining the actions of the ‘manger moms’. The ‘English feverish’ South Korean society mirrors the change of people’s lives and society they live in; how the ‘standard’ and/or ‘authentic’ American and/or British version of English are regarded as the key to success which leads to family honour and one’s social status are reflected through Blommaert’s and Pennycook’s discussion on how language affects society and the lives of people.

Lave & Wenger’s (1991) ‘Situated Learning Theory’ supports the concept of the truncated lifelong learning of South Korean ‘manager moms’ which is another component of the framework of this study. The concept of situated learning reasons that learning occurs on the basis of everyday social situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Contu & Willmott (2003), learning takes place through the process of social interaction leading individuals to be initiated into the ‘communities’ “in which they are acculturated as they participate actively in the diffusion, reproduction and transformation of knowledge in-practice about agents, activities, and artifacts” (p. 285). By sharing the same “cultural

systems of meaning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 54), learners understand the local context they live in. This is in line with the action South Korean ‘manager moms’ are taking by developing themselves through their own version of lifelong learning. Surrounded by the social pressure and situations, numerous South Korean mothers naturally engage in re/learning various subjects to aid their children’s study. This self-directed learning is stimulated by ‘communities’ of people who share similar concerns; this social interaction enhances the learning process and help these mothers gain hands-on knowledge they seek after.

There is a good match between the learning they pursue and the issues they face in the real world as South Korean mothers. The short-term lifelong learning is deemed as a practical and effective action to take in order to accomplish the mission given to them as mothers as well as develop themselves as individuals.

The theoretical factors that shape this study draw on three main concepts: Korean Confucianism, dominance of the English language fuelled by globalisation, and the action taken by the ‘manager moms’ through their own version of lifelong learning. These three key concepts, which are the main drivers for the actions and approaches ‘manager moms’ take, are tied together circling and explaining the phenomenon; South Korean ‘manager moms’ greatly affected by the Korean Confucian values, go extra miles to achieve their goals and responsibility by engaging in children’s education, especially English language education by taking active approaches which leads to their own lifelong learning. These three concepts act as drivers fuelling the changes not only in education but in the everyday lives of South Korean people impacting the nation as a whole. Situating the study within these main concepts, I now move on to discuss the methodologies applied and methods used to carry out this research.

CHAPTER 3 Methodology and Methods

In this chapter, the methods and methodology employed to carry out the study are discussed. As stated previously, the aim of this research is to investigate the lives of South Korean ‘manager moms’ in the context of globalised Confucian society where they drive themselves toward a unique version of short-termed self-directed lifelong learning to achieve their goal. This, therefore, was conducted as an inductive exploratory study that focuses on daily actions and words spoken and written by this particular group of mothers.

3.1 Research Paradigm

I am with Sikes, Nixon, & Carr (2003) in viewing research methodology as “a matter of history and morality, both of which inform and prescribe the epistemological assumptions underlying its application” (p.5). Accordingly, I examined the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon by implementing a qualitative approach which, I believe, was the most appropriate way in achieving the aims set that followed my own convictions. Exploring and understanding a social phenomenon deeply embedded in a unique cultural setting is a complex and messy exertion. To derive meaningful insights from this endeavour, it was essential to apprehend how the participants live within their social settings and how they make sense of their own actions within their world.

This is an intrinsic exploratory study by which new knowledge is formed from the perspectives of participants via my interpretation. Hence, this study diligently follows the framework and approaches that suit the nature of qualitative research. It is important to indicate my standpoint since my epistemological and ontological considerations construct the base of this study and how I drive the research. The conceptual framework (research

paradigm) not only guides the study but also presents an approach to how research questions should be explored.

An interpretivist approach, using naturalistic methods such as interviews, observations, diaries and focus group, was applied to examine the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon. The interpretation of findings was unavoidably subjective and from this social-constructionist view point, I believe, truth was negotiated with multiple perspectives. Agreeing with Charmaz’s (2006) assertion that, “[i]nterpretive qualitative methods mean entering research participants’ worlds” (p. 19), I tried my best to immerse into the participants’ lives and share their everyday experiences by constant interaction. It was inevitable that my own feelings and understanding of South Korean society affected my decision on how I designed and conducted this study. I truly valued the time I spent with my participants; they not only shared their rich stories and talks but witnessing their energetic and dynamic lives also provided me the opportunity to understand myself and my life as well. As much as I received from my participants, I believe my being there must also have influenced the participants’ perceptions of their own action and conduct. I tried hard to give them a chance to look back and reflect on their lives as ‘manager moms’ by listening carefully to what they wanted to say. My presence, as a researcher, should be seen as another resource for the study and what was understood in the research site was a product of my presence (Holliday, 2007).

To understand and analyse the phenomenon investigated, my beliefs and how I have come to know and view the world must be explained since the way I interpret knowledge and what it means to me would greatly affect the study. Bryman (2012) backs this statement by asserting that the research process is guided by researcher’s perception of understanding reality. The epistemological viewpoint builds a strong relationship between the researcher and reality. This guides the researcher to make decisions on how the phenomenon being explored should be investigated (ibid). Sikes (2004) asserts that a researcher’s ontological and epistemological assumptions must be reflected upon as these philosophical assumptions

influence the choice of methods and the whole of the research. Understanding the nature of reality and existence of knowledge is essential in how the researcher comprehends the nature of the phenomenon and how it is constructed (Wellington, 2015; Bryman, 2012).

The methodological standpoint of this study is situated within the social-constructionist paradigm which is in line with the interpretive theory. Charmaz (2014, 2006) explains that the Interpretive Theory adopts the social-constructionist view on how people construct and behave according to their interpretation of reality. She goes on to assert that under this paradigm, “[k]nowledge and theories are situated and located in particular positions, perspectives, and experiences” (2006, p. 127) which conceptualises the studied phenomenon. This research aims to generate new concepts on the topic of South Korean ‘manager moms’ accepting and succeeding the notion of reality being socially constructed and constantly changing. The interpretivist research paradigm guides the researcher to generate theoretical insights by deeply understanding human behaviour and the reasons behind the conduct (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). The subjective reality which is socially constructed brings uniqueness to a phenomenon situated within a given time and framework since different perceptions and positions enable people to view reality in their own way (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Due to knowledge being socially constructed through subjective experiences and perceptions, “there is no fact of the matter, but instead multiple interpretations and multiple realities” (Long, 2007, p. 147) which means truth is relative (Mezirow, 1996). Rather than generalising a phenomenon, gaining deeper understanding of what is happening could bring richer ideas and credible information to develop better recommendation and solution. Offering personal experience and beliefs often yields comprehensive understanding that compensates the lack of representativeness.

3.2 Research Approach: Qualitative Study

This research is qualitative in nature; qualitative work is messy and is never value free (Hatch, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to structure and bring out the beauty of the messy nature of qualitative study, I paid attention not only to what my participants said but why and how they said it. “Words are fatter than numbers and usually have multiple meanings” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 54) which makes it difficult to work with. Nonetheless, that is why qualitative studies produce attractive data (Bryman & Burgess, 2002) unique to each case. To ensure this study was reliable and credible, I continuously contacted my informants to make sure I was properly interpreting their beliefs, perceptions, and what they wanted to voice out. The open-ended approach I used enhanced this study to be more participant-centred rather than heavily relying on my own interpretation. In order to enter into my participants’ worlds, I spent time and effort to establish rapport and respect their boundaries. Utilising interpretative qualitative methods aided me to conduct this research accordingly.

Though a qualitative approach presents in-depth understanding of a phenomenon with rich stories that adds to the uniqueness, there are limitations such as exemplary instances heavily relying on field notes, the representativeness of the samples used, and the nature of raw data being distorted by the process of interpretation (Bryman, 1988). To compensate these limitations, methodological triangulation was brought in. I employed various data collection methods to maintain and protect the trustworthiness of the findings which assured my confidence in presenting the stories (Bryman, 2012). Stories and discussions from different participants using different methods enhance the richness of the findings with thicker descriptions and perspectives on complex human behaviour.

3.3 Positionality

It is vital to acknowledge the researcher's positionality as it affects the scope of the study (Sikes, 2004). I am approaching this socio-cultural phenomenon of South Korean 'manager moms' as a researcher who has already been directly involved with some of these so-called 'manager moms' and their children. As a matter of fact, I, myself, am a product of this societal phenomenon. As a South Korean who has actually experienced a mother's educational management, a language teacher acutely engaged in counselling mothers, and a family member of one of these manager mothers, my position influenced the direction of the study. There were limitations as well as advantages from myself being strongly related to the participants and the environment; due to the familiarity of the educational setting and the cultural context, I was able to feel more comfortable and welcomed. However, my status as a previous English language tutor may have brought biased views and in order to minimise the preconceptions, I constantly reflected on myself and reminded myself of my position by checking if this was the best way of asking questions, analysing and interpreting the data, and putting all this to writing throughout the whole process of producing this thesis. As a researcher who understands the South Korean culture and who has been involved in the educational sector, I tried my best in supporting these mothers' voice to be heard so that they could expose "different, deeper aspects of the phenomenon being studied" (Holliday, 2007, p.88).

Being reflexive has not been easy; stepping back from where I was in order to critically assess myself in my own research was often confusing and challenging. However, as my being in the middle of the study certainly affected the process and outcome, it was crucial to constantly refer back and examine 'self' (Finlay, 2002).

3.4 Research Design

I designed this study based on qualitative research methods since the focus was on understanding and investigating the South Korean ‘manager moms’ on their perceptions of teaching/guiding their children in English language education and how this deed relates to their own learning based on the lifelong education perspectives. Hence, the nature of this research logically fitted into the qualitative paradigm. I thought the combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups backed up by observations and diaries would provide a deep insight on lives of these ‘manager moms’. I first wanted to make sure the questions I would be asking were relevant to this study and confirm that the scope of my questions answered what I was to examine. I conducted a short pilot study before the main data collection to test the applicability and credibility of the questions I generated.

While crafting this research, I constantly questioned myself on what is it that I wanted to understand and learn about; Is it the South Korean ‘manager moms’? Or is it what they produce? Persistently looking back and asking myself helped me shape my questions. I designed questions for the interviews and focus groups based upon what was happening to my participants, what was going on around their lives, and what actions they were taking to tackle the issues faced as ‘manager moms’. Keeping these in mind, I carefully planned out my data collection procedure which is discussed in the next few sections.

Finally, to make sure that the methods suited well and the designs of the research complied with the aims and objectives, I conducted a pilot study with two South Korean women before the main fieldwork. I then tried my best to improve the methodology and/or methods accordingly to gain effective information for this study.

3.4.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with two mothers who fitted well into the South Korean ‘manager mom’ category to form a foundation for the main study; these two participants were recruited by phone calls. I focused on what was being recurred to briefly draw out patterns that might be central to this study and concentrated on pre-testing the interview questions to make sure they were focused and easy to understand. Carrying out a pilot study gives the researcher a chance to experience and get a feeling for what to anticipate in the main study (Polit, et al., 2001) by pointing out unforeseen problems that might affect the result (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009) as well as reveal new ideas and predict likely outcome (Teijlingen, et al., 2001).

By carrying out this pilot study, I realised that it would be a good idea to ask my participants for focus group meetings, if possible. Piloting the study allowed me to test the adequacy of the research instruments I wanted to employ. Initially, I designed my research methods to include interviews, observations, and diaries, however, while interviewing the two pilot study participants, one of them briefly mentioned that she was not good at telling stories but she would prefer talking in a group setting where she can listen to and share issues she faced as a mother. When asked specific questions, the other participant also iterated that she was not sure how to answer those questions but with some insights from other mothers who were in similar situation, she might have been able to elaborate a bit more on those topics; I realised that there would be participants who may feel the same way which led me decide to ask my participants for focus group meetings.

I discovered that the pilot study was critical for the main study; it assisted me in re-designing the methods as well as giving me ideas on how to ask questions to generate more detailed answers from the participants. I also was able to check if my interview questions were relevant to exploring the research questions and could confirm if the participants clearly understood the questions posed. By piloting the interview questions, I realised I had to

reorganise some questions and rephrase the way I asked certain questions. The pilot study provided me with the opportunity to assess my approaches (Peat, et al., 2002).

The pilot study was a great start to gathering data; it produced preliminary data and gave me an idea of what I could expect (Polit, et al., 2001). I found that both participants were truly passionate when talking about their experience as ‘manager moms’ and their moms’ groups which became the main themes for the findings. The two participants gave constructive feedback which significantly helped in refining the interview questions (Peat, et al., 2002). Owing to the pilot study, I was able go into the main study with more confidence.

3.4.2 Research Site

I followed Huberman & Miles’s (2002) advice that when choosing sites for conducting field work the sites should “fit with [the] typical situation” (p. 181). Since the focus of this study is on South Korean ‘manager moms’ in dealing with English language education for their children, the main location of the fieldwork was in the areas where many active ‘manager moms’ apparently gather and live for the best education possible. In South Korea, there are four areas famous for being the ‘exclusive/special educational zone’, all four regions are located in or near the capital city, Seoul. Of these four areas, *Kangnam* is the most intense and well-known region (Lawrence, 2012; Seth, 2002; Sorensen, 1994). These special areas have the reputation for catering for the ‘best’ education possible and zealous parents move to these regions just for their children’s educational needs. The ‘moving rush’ has caused the price of houses and apartments to soar in these particular areas (Yang, 2011). Nevertheless this has not hindered education-obsessive parents from moving into these expensive zones. Mothers form their own groups or cliques with other mothers who they believe to fit the standard of their own lifestyles to share valuable information and network for their children (Lim, 2014; Kim, S., 2011). These groups hold powerful influence in the ‘exclusive

educational regions’ and are very much exclusive in that new-coming mothers struggle a lot to be a part. So called upper-middle class and middle-class families mostly occupy the ‘special educational districts’, however, there are quite a few lower-middle class families moving in just for the sake of their children’s education (Park, 2013).

As these areas accommodate the majority of the largest and most famous private institutions and cram schools, apparently the ‘best’ education is offered and received with the particularly famous ‘star tutors’ always ready to assist customers (Chung, 2013). These exceptionally unique educational frenzy zones signify success to people of South Korea and not surprisingly, at the core of these zones sit ‘manager moms’. I chose these special areas as the main locations of my field work as vast amount of new information are continuously being exchanged amongst parents, and one can easily feel the prevailing educational feverish atmosphere. The pilot study was also conducted in one of the ‘exclusive educational zones’.

I investigated mothers who did not belong to the four special areas as well for this study; for this, I selected two satellite cities in other provinces in South Korea. I included mothers who believed they were ‘manager moms’, those who did not agree with the idea of ‘manager moms’, and/or those who were not keen on the whole notion of this phenomenon.

3.4.3 Participants

I had a total of thirty participants for this research; twenty one mothers, one mom-to-be, three English language teachers, two children living in South Korea, and three mothers currently living overseas where the dominant language used is English (Canada, Singapore, and USA). I have conducted hour long one-to-one semi-structured interviews with all the adult participants in South Korea and thirty minute long interviews with the two children with their mothers present at site taking part in the conversation. Within ten days after the interviews, I asked for follow up interviews or focus group meetings. Two focus groups

with seven mother participants were held; each focus group meeting lasted for an hour. Five observations also were carried out at various locations after the interviews; these observations, too, took an hour each. I asked some mother participants if they could provide me with short logs or diaries; three of them agreed. I used phone calls of up to thirty minutes, and emails with the three mother participants living abroad.

I carefully chose my participants using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is an effective method of selecting particular participants who are likely to offer critical information for the research (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007). I needed those who were living in South Korea and currently involved in managing their children's education and/or those who were English language teachers. I used my connections to get in touch with potential participants who eventually introduced me to other potential participants; this snowball sampling which is referred as "a process of reference from one person to the next" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 18), was truly a resourceful way to recruit participants who knew a lot about what I wanted to know and who were willing to share their stories. I have categorised my participants into stay-home moms, working moms, others, overseas moms, and children (see Appendix VII).

I decided to hold short interviews with two children participants to enrich my findings and to support what the adult participants were saying. I sought permission from the mothers first and under their consent I approached the children for their agreement. I asked the children and both of them agreed to a thirty minute talk with me while their mothers were present. It was more of a conversation amongst the child, the mother, and myself. In order to avoid harm, I designed the questions in a simple manner and asked the child participant to choose a place he/she preferred. I ended up talking to both children participants at their homes. By often meeting and visiting them and sharing my time with them, I not only wanted my participants to feel comfortable around me but also wanted to let them know I was eager to open up and share my story, too. As Hammond & Wellington (2013) suggest, "honesty and openness should prevail in the relationship between researchers and those who participate in

the research” (p. 61). I have to fully agree with this assertion, especially with child participants, since they understood that I was sincere and sensitive towards their feelings. I did not forget to constantly check to make sure I was not breaching any ethical guidelines while meeting my participants and managing the data.

I wanted to go further and interview South Korean geese mothers who currently live abroad in English speaking countries. I chose three mothers who have been my close acquaintances for a long time and were more than willing to contribute to this research. I initially contacted them by phone and all three of them agreed to participate; thirty minute long phone calls and email interviews (open-ended questions with written responses) were conducted. Due to the locational circumstances, using email to communicate was efficient and effective.

Most participants except for the teachers have school age child/ren; the amount of attention given to the children’s school work by their mothers, especially in English and mathematics education is tremendous. Therefore, I thought the best fit for this study was to recruit mothers who were currently trying to teach and guide their children with their studies and in doing so, find ways to self-direct their own learning to be an efficient ‘home’ teacher. Mothers with younger children had higher tendency to be focused on learning themselves, to be of great help to their children when it comes to English language studies. I also held interviews with teachers, a mother-to-be, and an older mother who have already gone through all this managing to listen to their view on South Korean ‘manager moms’.

I have kept in contact with all my participants throughout the whole process of completing this thesis; I went back to them via email and phone calls to ask for their opinions on the transcriptions and my interpretations. They have provided me with more ideas and thoughts even after the main data collection period.

3.4.4 Phases of Data Collection

Theoretical saturation or data saturation is the point when no new concepts or ideas emerge and no issues arise (Bowen, 2008; Bryman, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990); this means that “the data categories are well established and validated” (Bowen, 2008, p. 140). While conducting my fieldwork, I concurrently started analysing the data gathered. I kept on meeting the participants till I could no longer generate new “thematic ideas” (ibid, p, 145).

I initially designed the fieldwork to last for twelve weeks. The first phase of data collection started in early July, 2014 with interviews followed by two focus group meetings and follow-up interviews. I designed the size of the groups by taking Morgan’s (in Bryman, 2008) advice that, “when participants are likely to have a lot to say on the research topic... [and]...when participants are very involved in or emotionally preoccupied with the topic” (p. 479) it is better to have smaller groups since the prime aim is to understand “participants’ personal accounts” (p. 479) on complex topics. I only had two focus groups but I believe my data were significant since the synergy amongst the participants helped produce more in-depth accounts of their stories that reinforced the main themes.

The second phase started a week after the focus groups and follow-up interviews. I wanted to give the participants some time to decide whether they felt like continuing on with this study. Out of the twenty one mothers who were asked for observation and/or writing short logs/diaries, twelve agreed to continue with the second phase. I again informed them that the observations and logs would supplement the main interviews.

3.5 Research Methods

“[T]he activity or business of choosing, reflecting upon, evaluating and justifying the methods you use” (Wellington, 2005, p. 33) is a vital part in comprising theoretically sound

methodology. Based on Wellington's claim, this sub-section discusses the various methods employed to gather qualitative data which constitute the framework of the study. Then I move on to justify the methodological choices I made.

3.5.1 Interview

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with each of the participants in the Korean language. Interview is a favoured method in qualitative research since it provides opportunity to directly engage in an in-depth conversation with the person who has experience in what the researcher is investigating (Charmaz, 2014, 2006; Stenhouse, 1981). By engaging with the participants to elaborate on their thoughts and ideas in a comfortable environment, semi-structured interview motivates interviewees to discuss things they have not opened up previously aiding researchers to understand what could not be observed before (Wellington, 2000, p. 71).

Participants' experiences and personal narratives generate specific pictures of each incident or situation which help the researcher better understand the phenomenon in a more descriptive way (Cohen, et al., 2000). I tried my best to carry out the interviews in a conversational tone rather than asking numerous questions; this was to lead the participants into talking about what they felt like discussing so that the interview could flow naturally like a dialogue. I also wanted to give the participants the lead in directing and commanding the interview.

All interviews were audio-recorded under the permission of the participants and they were reminded that they had the right to refuse the interviews being recorded. I took short notes during the interviews on what I thought of the situation and on the non-audible parts that occurred such as body languages, facial expressions, and movements with the face-to-face interviews. Gestures and body languages, such as making eye contact, vary among different

cultures which express traditions and customs of particular society (Kessler, 2009). These factors enrich the data and assign different meanings to each word spoken.

I prepared fourteen questions for the teacher participants and seventeen for the mothers for an hour long interview (see Appendix IV), however, I went with the flow; new ideas were formed during the interviews and I tried to keep the interviews exciting and interesting by checking what my participants wanted to elaborate and concentrate on. This gave flexibility and time for new ideas to emerge (Drever, 1995). Interviews with the children participants were conducted with more cautious considerations. Mothers were there with us for the whole interview and it was more like a conversation amongst the three of us which lasted for thirty minutes.

I had three participants living abroad and with them I had to conduct phone interviews supported by email communications. For this bunch of participants, the interviews via phone took about thirty minutes each and the parts I thought needed more explanation or questions I wanted to branch out, I put them as short open-ended questions (see Appendix VI) and sent it to them via email. The questions sent were based on the interview questions which I felt would be more suitable for writing due to the circumstance that I could not possibly go meet them in person. Before the phone interviews, I sent the interview questions to them by email so that they could “reflect and think about their responses” (Burke & Miller, 2001, p. 3) before the actual interview. I followed Burke & Miller’s (2001) advice and picked convenient time for the participants to talk on the phone. I had to consider the time difference and set a time when the participants could fit the phone interview in their schedules.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group yields rich insights into participants' beliefs and attitudes on a given topic; the lively interaction of participants divulges their viewpoints and how they approve or disapprove with one another's opinions and ideas. Focus group discussions generate rich data with multiple voices that are co-produced by all the participants (Merryweather, 2010) which enhances the quality of the data. By engaging with each other and sharing ideas, the dynamic of a focus group not only offers synergy amongst participants which leads to generating new insights for the study (Parker & Tritter, 2006; Kitzinger, 1994) but also reveals how participants interact in a group setting (Johnson, 1996; Kitzinger, 1995). Focus group discussion was a particularly effective method in bringing participants to talk about shared experience (Patton, 2002) and provide them with the opportunity to learn from one another (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).

Owing to the nature of focus group, it was a methodologically sound mode to apply in this study. Due to the cultural norms of South Korean people being reserved and not wanting to be frank in sharing sensitive issues with others especially when it comes to sharing information that is hard to get (Choi, T., 2005), I designed focus group meetings with mothers who were acquainted with one another. I was fortunate enough to pull together two sets of focus group meetings. I initially was going to ask my participants for a follow up one-to-one interview, instead, I suggested focus group meetings which some of the participants kindly agreed upon.

Since most of my participants knew one another, I thought holding focus group with them may bring synergy not only to my data but to the participants as well. I conducted two focus group meetings with seven participants; the first group consisted of four participants and the second had three. Both focus group meetings each lasted an hour and were audio-recorded under the participants' consent. These focus group meetings were held after one-to-one interviews. I paid attention to the settings since location affects participants' interaction and

I wanted to hold the meetings where they could all feel comfortable (Denscombe, 2007). The first focus group was conducted in a quiet café where the participants always met and the second was held in one of the participants' homes.

I had to be mindful of the sensitive nature of participants coming together to share their stories and therefore the degree of my involvement as a researcher had to be kept flexible. I tried my best to lead the discussion as smoothly as possible and at the same time not disturb the dynamic of the group talk.

3.5.3 Observation

Observation was another method I used for this study. This method allows the researcher to catch unarticulated ideas in the real environment where everyday activities happen. Some participants might reveal their unconscious thoughts that they have not expressed in interviews (Cohen, et al., 2000). This happened when I conducted my field work; observations took place after the interviews and what I could not witness from the interviews were revealed through this method. The information obtained by the observations became the main basis for the themes of this study.

Observation takes several different forms depending on researcher's roles. I conducted my observations as a participant observer with mothers' group since it was natural being a part of the scene and contribute somehow to their conversation rather than sit quietly taking notes. Considering the Korean culture, I believed this method was the best fit with this group of mothers. Keeping quiet without any input or involvement might have caused uneasiness amongst the participants. However, when observing mothers teaching/guiding their children at home, I took the position as a non-participant observer to capture the nature of the situated activities without interfering their studies (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). I also asked for

permission to visit the participants' homes before any interviews or observations took place so that children could feel comfortable having me around.

According to Jersild & Meigs (1939), observers should be selective since he/she "cannot see and record everything" (p. 474). Hence, an intensive note-taking strategy was carried out during the observations with specific points being picked out according to the research questions. My notes consisted of words, short sentences, descriptions of participants' actions, my feelings and thoughts on particular scenes and the environment; they were taken in both English and Korean for efficiency and effectiveness.

Before starting the observations, I visited the participants' home under their permission to let the children familiarise themselves with me and also check the environment where my observation would take place. The children were notified by their mothers on the observation and the process. All observations and interviews were conducted under the mothers' consent.

Twelve participants agreed to the observation and with those twelve, five observations were organised. Observations were held at various locations ranging from the participants' homes to cafés and grocery stores. Out of the five observations, two of them were group-based observations with mothers who knew one another well; the first group observation had four participants whom I observed at a café. The second group observation with four participants as well, took place at a participant's home. The third observation had two participants, a mother and her daughter. This third observation took place at various sites such as in the car and in a supermarket. The participants from the third observation invited me to their house after the observation and we had a thirty minute long conversation, which I considered as an interview with the child participant. The other two observations had one participant each where I specifically observed each mother participant's daily schedule. The observation method provides the researcher with the opportunity to "understand people within their natural environment" (Baker, 2006, p. 173). The observations not only took place in their

homes but also places they hold group meetings with other mothers, their study sites, and even in a supermarket – places they are familiar with and visit regularly.

The hour long observations were sometimes divided up, for example, thirty minutes at home and another thirty at a study site. Two of the participants, Hani and Minju¹¹, kindly offered me to follow them along for a whole day so that I could get a better insight of manager moms' lives. I accompanied them in picking up and dropping off children to schools and cram schools, going to bookstores and libraries, going to study group meetings, and/or meeting up other mothers; this was possible due to both of them offering to be observed more than once. The observations were partially audio-recorded (only in audible places such as quiet bookstores, coffee shops, and supermarkets) under participants' consent. They also gladly provided me with short logs/diaries explaining a normal day as 'manager moms' and their thoughts on managing their children's education.

I paid attention to their actions, attitudes (voice, tone) and body languages. While observing at homes, I observed how they were utilising what they have learned/ the information gathered and how they interacted with their children and/or other mothers by checking the words being used, actions taken, and methods used. I knew my presence would affect the participants' behaviour and thoughts (Cohen, 1998) therefore to minimise this problem, I visited and met up with them as many times as possible, especially for the younger participants to familiarise themselves with me.

3.5.4 Diaries

I asked participants to write short logs/diaries whenever they felt like expressing their thoughts and five of them agreed. They used the logs to organise their plans and elaborate on 'managing' their children's and their own schedules, to jot down their thoughts, and

¹¹ Pseudonyms were used to anonymise all participants of this study.

sometimes to communicate with me. Some of them wrote a short poem, a sentence, or even a word which was quite powerful in expressing their feelings. Small memo pads were provided to each of the participants so that they could use them any time they wanted. It was completely voluntary, therefore I realised that there might be some participants who would not share what they had written or drawn. It did happen with two of the participants, and I did not get to read their logs, yet I believe it was a good exercise for them on reflecting back and understanding themselves as mothers.

Hammond & Wellington (2013) stress that diaries/logs “can be a valuable complement for other methods and is particularly important when observation is impossible” (p. 49). I believe this method of utilising diaries indeed complemented other methods employed in this study. I did acknowledge that participants might be unenthusiastic about keeping a log especially when they knew it would be read by another person (the researcher) and for that reason there could be the possibility that the writings might not show genuine feelings and thoughts of the participants. It was important to understand this and be aware of these issues as a researcher (ibid).

There were no limitations to the content and length of the logs, however I did asked them to write whatever that came to their minds on ‘managing’ their children’s education. I believe that, “[d]iaries can provide informants’ own versions or interpretations of events” (Hammond & Wellington, 2013, p. 49). The logs written by the participants enriched the study by adding new dimensions, variables, and attitudes.

Out of the five participants who wrote logs, three of them got back to me with their writings. I received two hard copies from two participants. The other participant asked if she could keep the original version of the log and instead sent me readable snapshots of her short diary via email. The two who did not share their diaries with me came back to me by calling me on the phone; they wanted to talk about what they wrote instead of having me read their

writings. The phone conversations I had with these two participants provided me with different aspects of understanding their situations as ‘manager moms’.

3.5.5 Justification of Methods

This study aimed to examine and understand the phenomenon of ‘manager moms’ by listening to their voices rather than make generalisations. Though this study was based on specific mothers of South Korea, what I hope is that this thesis could help readers to generalise the findings to their own contexts. Through analytic generalisation, the phenomenon I investigated could shed light on understanding similar cases in different societies. This is in line with Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) explanation of transferability which explains the degree to which a study could be generalised or transferred to other frame of references. Due to this study being authentic and unique to the South Korean context, I paid attention to the ‘relatability’ of my findings. According to Bassey (1981), relatability is important since sufficiency and appropriateness of each case or story are crucial in making decision or applying to similar situation. Taylor, et al. (2008) support this by asserting that, “if a practitioner who is working in a similar environment is able to relate his/her decision making to that described in the published ...research, then relatability, has been achieved” (p. 28).

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) and Huberman & Miles (2002), it is not the scientific validity that justifies the true value of the study in qualitative research; it should be evaluated by the credibility and understanding of the work. As long as the data derived are armed with participants’ experiences and perspectives, they hold the credibility. Kemmis (1980) supports this view by asserting that if the process of the study is accessible then the study is rightfully justified.

To ensure the interpretive trustworthiness of gathered data, respondent confirmation was crucial. I constantly went back to my participants to check the data and make sure my interpretation was credible. Getting feedback from participants by member checking on my interpretation of data (Hammond & Wellington, 2013), not only assured my confidence with the findings but also enhanced the 'trustworthiness' of this research. Hammond & Wellington (2013) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) affirm that the 'trustworthiness' of a research depends on the credibility of the data which enhance the quality of the study. I abided by this guidance while conducting this research.

I did not forget to pay attention to the dependability of this study. I elaborated on the South Korean context in which this study occurred whilst keenly observing the constantly changing nature of society that greatly influence this study. I was responsible for explaining how the context and settings this study was situated in affected the approach and the process of research.

I enhanced the confirmability by constantly checking and re-checking the data. I kept separate files and recorded the procedure I went through to re-check data. Confirmability is crucial since it promises objectiveness by the results being confirmed by others (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In order to gain insights on everyday occurrences of these particular mothers in South Korea, the best possible way, I believe, was to experience their lives with them through various methods with keen eyes and an open mind. To comprehend what and how they were achieving their goals as 'manager moms', their expectations and/or what they consider to be the most important mission in their lives were a truly complex and messy business that could not have been thoroughly measured quantitatively. The methods I adopted fit well with the qualitative nature of this study and by utilising these methods, the research generated interesting concepts which, I hope, could shed light on bringing out awareness of the challenges and needs of these South Korean mothers.

3.5.6 Field Notes

By writing down experienced and/or observed realities, the researcher brings back a past event into a different time zone where it could be re-consulted and re-evaluated (Emerson, et al., 2011). In order to preserve the passing events, I always had my small notebook with me during fieldwork. I kept it near me to write down anything and everything related to my data collection. I took notes while collecting data and as soon as I came home, I added more to it on how I thought the interviews and observations went and what I felt was left out and/or was good or poorly done. Furthermore, I appended what I learnt from that day's fieldwork and what I should pay more attention to. It was a great way of being reflexive - impacting both this study and myself as a person. Looking back and bringing those experiences forward to improve myself and my research could not have been done properly without my field notes. Field notes "serve the crucial role of connecting researchers and their subjects in the writing of an ethnographic report" (Wolfinger, 2002, p. 92). Therefore, it is not surprising to regard them as a part of the researcher. Field notes not only illustrate the events recorded but also reflect the researcher's background knowledge and beliefs (ibid). Writing field notes was inevitable since it added much richness to the collected data representing "events, persons and places that "(re)constitute that world in preserved forms that can be reviewed, studied and thought about time and time again" (Emerson, et al., 2011, p. 353). According to Lofland & Lofland (2006), field notes greatly assist the researcher in analysing the social settings; by delineating the specific environment and location where certain event is happening, the researcher is able to vividly recall and study the phenomenon in a more meaningful way.

I wrote my field notes in both Korean and English; I felt like I wanted to write down my emotions to reflect on what I had seen, heard, and done with my participants and it was only natural to write these in the Korean language; they were words, short sentences, scribbles and sometimes long paragraphs. When it came to certain phrases that came to my mind in

English or English words I thought would suit well when translating some parts, I jotted them down using the English language. I considered these field notes as my own diary and when I got stuck writing up the thesis, I went back and read parts of these notes and looked at the scribbles I drew randomly and tried to remember how I felt at that particular moment, which helped me get through tough times. Reflecting on the verbal and/or non-verbal communication between the participant(s) and myself, as a researcher, a friend, a teacher and an acquaintance not only helped me learn and grow more but also (re)organised my ideas as to structuring this thesis. I tried to contextualise the event, words spoken, people involved and the context through writing the field notes so I could make sure I did not take things happening for granted (Jackson, 1990).

3.6 Data Analysis

Glaser (1992, 1978) stresses the importance of studying the emerging data; I agree with what he claims here because what is being sought is all embedded in the data. Hence, deciding on methods of analysis that suit the data is deemed crucial.

As a qualitative interpretive research, this study generated data through interviews, focus groups, observations, and logs/diaries. To integrate data collected with various methods thematic analysis was employed to construe the meaning of data by drawing out re-occurring motifs. Thematic analysis offers flexible ways to interpret complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78) and is “[l]ikely to reflect the analyst’s awareness of recurring ideas and topics in the data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 555). This particular analysis seemed to fit well with the study of ‘manager moms’ due to the research being an exploratory study and the nature of data gathered.

The transcribed data were coded for categorisation by themes developed according to the research questions posed. While organising and analysing data, I adapted Strauss and

Corbin's Paradigm Model (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 1990) to integrate and refine the themes; I modified the original model to fit my data and used the newly created version (see p. 217 Figure 4.2) for the purpose of developing a theory.

Though I employed an adaptive form of a model used in Grounded Theory to systematise the findings, the overarching framework of this study was not based on this particular approach. The research context and questions were defined and preordained before data collection and were refined after the analysis which did not entirely fit into the Grounded Theory method. I cannot deny the fact that elements of Grounded Theory approach were used in some places due to this study being exploratory; this study was carried out based on themes developed from the gathered data which were presented in a modified version of a theoretical model related to Grounded Theory. Rather than analysing the data according to the theoretical framework given before the data collection, themes were mainly developed by repeating the process of analysis used widely in Grounded Theory which led to construction of a theory (Charmaz, 2014). Therefore, it could be argued that I used a constructionist approach of Grounded Theory, however, I stress that it would be an overstatement to claim that this work is wholly based on this method.

Recognising and discovering patterns to examine a social phenomenon of a particular culture and society were central in developing concepts and understanding the context. Considering "essential features and relationships" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 9) of the context and people involved in the study and investigating re-occurring themes indeed would help in developing new theories/concepts. Thus, I employed a thematic analysis method to understand and interpret data to answer the research questions and "offer a fresh or deeper understanding of the studied phenomena...[to] make an original contribution" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 153). Coffey & Atkinson (1996) claim that qualitative data analysis should be able to "describe, classify, and connect" (p. 8) in order to give new meanings to the phenomenon discussed; by employing thematic analysis this, I believe, was achieved. I

conclude this section with Braun & Clarke's (2006) strong summary of why thematic analysis fits in well with qualitative studies:

[I]ndividuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'. Therefore, thematic analysis can be a method that works both to reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality' (p. 81).

3.6.1 Thematic Analysis

In order to make sense out of the vast amount of messy and complex data, I had to choose an analytic method that draws out the unique characteristics of obtained stories, discussions, perceptions, and the daily conduct of my participants. Thematic analysis is an effective method in grouping unstructured data into concepts and theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 87) introduce the process of adopting thematic analysis as: 1) identify patterns of meaning by familiarising self with the data; 2) coding data; 3) developing themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) define and name themes; 6) produce a report.

In order to identify patterns of meaning, I carefully examined the data to grasp what my participants were involved with by investigating the events and situations they were in at the moment. While immersing myself into the context, I developed relevant themes and questioned issues that held answers to my research questions. This procedure of analysing data by themes successfully assisted me to plan where to "place most energy during the next contact and what sorts of information should be sought" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 50) as well as guided me to ponder deeply on "the main themes, issues, problems, and questions that I saw" (ibid, p. 50) during field work.

Thematic analysis was a good fit to scrutinise the huge amount of qualitative data gathered; I wanted to identify what my participants really meant by examining not only on what they said but how they said it and what they meant. I started out coding the thick description of

my data and formed abstract categories according to the main themes derived which were then interpreted theoretically to conceptualise a theory. The five major categories, the core themes, are displayed and discussed in the next chapter; data were not imposed but they were developed by the participants' narrative utterances, actions observed, and their written diaries.

I characterised my key findings into the main driving forces, three levels of forces influencing the 'manager mom' phenomenon, and the actions derived from those forces; these core themes, which formed a new model, became the underlying motifs of the conceptualised theory. The macro theme that constructed the contextual background of this study was based on the concept of globalisation and how the aspects of linguistic globalisation affect society. Fitting into the meso level theme was the change of the Confucian South Korean society fuelled by globalisation and neoliberal ideas such as reproduction of education, power, and social status largely caused by education. These issues discussed in this level are centred on Koreanised Confucianism which is the philosophical framework of this study. The micro theme consisted of phenomena occurring everywhere every day in South Korea due to the reasons mentioned in the macro and meso levels; the emergence of star tutors, private academies/cram schools, geese families, mothers' groups/cliques and the incredible investment of these mothers, and how they adapt to this complex way of life are discussed accordingly to the frame work of this study in the next chapter.

These existing theories were mixed and blended to explain how the world has shaped 'manager moms' and how these mothers, in turn shape the world, cope with education and position themselves in the context of a rapidly changing globalising society.

3.6.2 Adapted Version of the Paradigm Model

I elaborate again that the whole thesis was not conducted based on the Grounded Theory approach; nevertheless I find the need to touch on it due to the model I used. Grounded Theory is defined by Bryman (2008) as “[a]n approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two” (p. 694). Charmaz (2014) adds to Bryman’s definition that this approach “consist[s] of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” (p. 1). Grounded Theory lays out the ground for the researcher to flexibly conduct research and derive a theory out of the gathered data rather than testing an existing theory. Researchers using Grounded Theory go into the field without knowing what kind of data will be collected. They do not have specific research questions in mind; they conduct field work to explore and later on build an understanding based on the data (Creswell, 2007).

I employed the Paradigm Model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) used in Grounded Theory and modified it to fit and explain my thematically analysed findings. I chose this model to guide the process of analysis and systematically display data since the sequence I have initially designed to examine my data fit well into this model.

The Paradigm Model is an effective “conceptual analytic device for organizing data and integrating structure with process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 142). This model was developed in order to effectively connect the process of categorisation which shaped Grounded Theory into more of a generalised version (Choi, G., 2005). I found this model justly helpful in analysing data hence adapted it to frame my findings. The Paradigm Model asks questions such as when, where, what, how, who, and why to set the structure and process amongst categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Grasping the fine line between categories was not a straightforward process rather it was quite a confusing and complicated work. The Paradigm Model helped guide my focus through this hectic process. Raising the

codes to conceptual categories by searching for common themes and patterns was aided by fieldwork memos and my research journal.

The Paradigm Model systematically connects the relationships amongst all categories that are grouped into actions and conditions leading to consequences. Causal conditions are events that influence the phenomenon, which for my research fit into the micro level circumstances. Contextual conditions are defined as “specific sets of conditions (patterns of conditions) that intersect dimensionally at this time and place to create the set of circumstances” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 132) which explain social influences in a broader view; this coincides with the macro level of my findings. Intervening conditions present those that “alter the impact of causal conditions” (ibid, p. 131). These sections of the Paradigm Model collectively force agents to take actions and/or to interact by utilising effective strategies. Actions/interaction strategies explain the approaches taken in order to handle the situation and possibly resolve the problem. These finally generate intended or unintended consequences. The flow of the Paradigm Model was what I was looking for in order to explain my data in a logical manner which is why I employed and adapted this model. By setting my version of a model, I was able to conceptualise my findings systematically.

Using this model assisted the course of analysis by enriching the process and provided more insights as to how to organise scattered patterns of data. I believe it was an effective choice to have combined an adapted model of Grounded Theory approach with thematic analysis method during the process of extensively analysing data. The themes were developed by using the adapted version of the Paradigm Model which structured the findings of this study. I realised that the basis of analysing data using a Grounded Theory approach and thematic analysis were quite similar in nature since both approaches guide the researcher to familiarise oneself with data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes, and produce a systematic report (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and repeat this till the point of saturation.

For this study, I identified the issue I wanted to investigate and formulated initial research questions before fieldwork. Only the findings and analysis chapter is presented using an adapted form of the Paradigm Model used in Grounded Theory. My data being the core of this exploratory study, settled into the adapted form of this model. I concentrated and considered from different angles on what I wanted to find out and learn from my data. The process I went through to unearth the deep meanings in my findings was a long yet valuable journey; transcribing and understanding the data, coding them accordingly, reducing the data and grouping them to generate higher categories and conceptualising those categories to derive a theory was done effectively due to the adapted and modified version of the Paradigm Model that I titled the *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms* (see p. 217 Figure 4.2).

3.6.3 Stages of Data Analysis

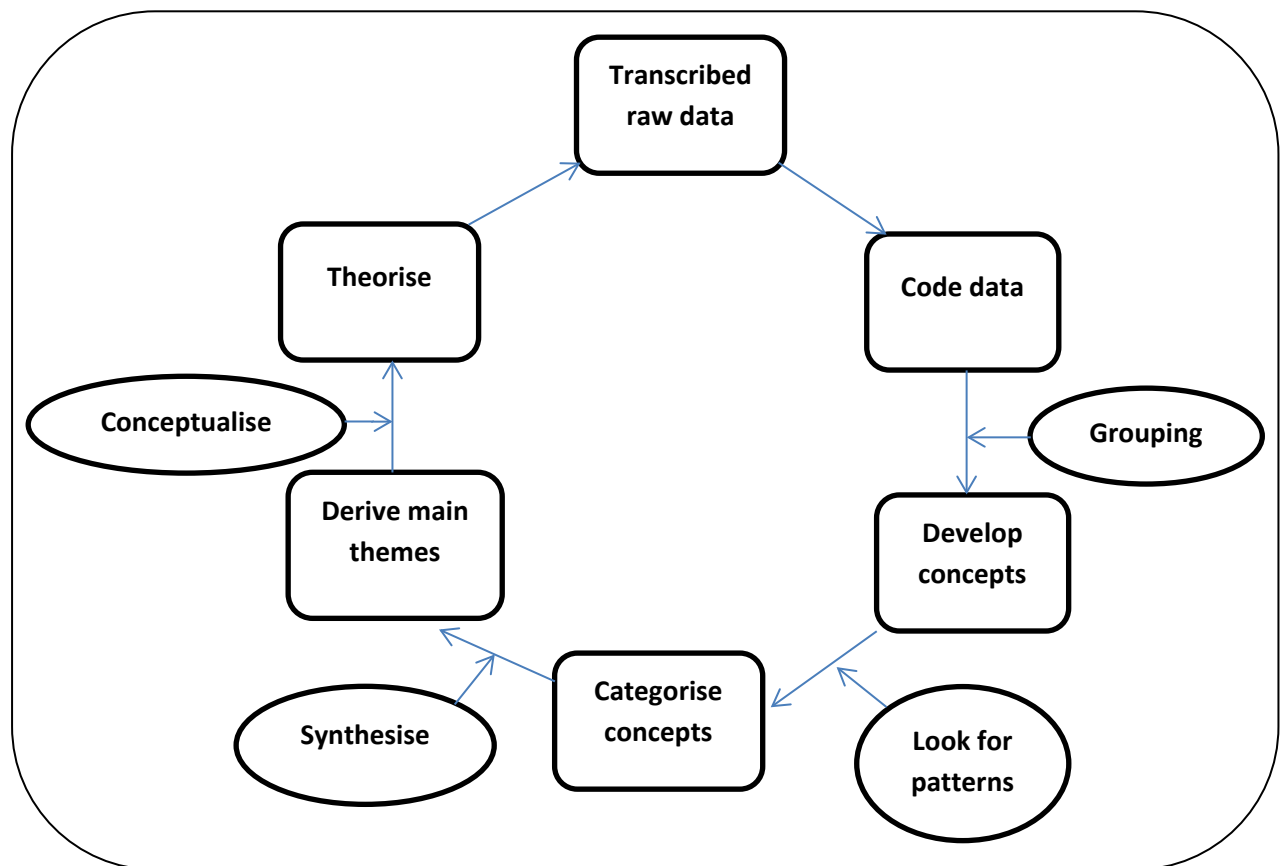
Analysing data was an ongoing process; I repetitively visited the raw data to make sure I was interpreting accordingly and continuously communicated with my participants to ensure the trustworthiness of my analysis. As soon as I came back from each fieldwork trip, I immediately transcribed the audio-recorded files in order to minimise the loss of vivid moments and images. During the initial coding period, I listened to the audio-recorded files repeatedly for accurate transcription. After transcribing data, I carefully read the transcriptions several times and took memos to develop concepts; this process included studying words, lines and segments as well as incidents.

After reading and re-reading transcribed data from the interviews, focus groups, observations, and logs, the raw data were all coded through *NVivo* (see 3.6.5). Coded data were then grouped into concepts. Concepts are “abstract representation of an event, object, action/interaction that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data” (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998, p. 103) which are the “product[s] of labelling and categorising” (Pandit, 1996, p. 10) the phenomenon. The next step was to reduce descriptive data and organise them around similar ideas; concepts were divided and/or combined according to related motifs. By this process, twenty eight lower categories were shaped which then after continuous categorisation were developed into twelve higher categories. Categories, grouped concepts with certain patterns (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), were studied for re-occurring themes. At this stage, I developed the *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms* (see p. 217 Figure 4.2) and applied it to systematise the core themes. According to the model, the higher categories were clustered around core categories, the central themes; five main themes were shaped. During the final stage of analysis, I synthesised and conceptualised the main themes and drew out the conclusion; interpreting and theorising were recurring process (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994) until the main themes that stood as the pillars of this study were shaped. I explicated ideas, events, themes and patterns to develop an analytic framework. I diligently went back to the former stages of data analysis and revisited the raw data to check the process before formalising the interpretation of my findings and develop it theoretically and systematically into a substantive theory. Figure 3.1 illustrates the stages I went through to analyse the data.

I faithfully took Miles & Huberman’s (1994) recommendation and reduced data by collating, summarising, and coding data into categories and themes then organised and assembled them into a displayable model. Finally, by conceptualising and giving meaning to data, I drew a conclusion which formed a theory.

Figure 3.1 Stages of Analysis



3.6.4 Transcribing and Translating the Data

Most data were collected in the Korean language. I transcribed the audio-recorded data in Korean and deliberately analysed the data in the Korean language instead of translating it into English. This decision was made in order to maintain the authenticity of the rich data and hold onto the true meaning of participants' voices. During this process, I learned more about my participants and their thoughts by revisiting the audio-recorded files and memos I had jotted down during fieldwork which later on helped with translating the Korean transcripts into English. Translating the transcribed data into English was carried out simultaneously while writing up the thesis.

Korean is a complex language with different levels of politeness embedded into it. There are certain ways and words to address people according to their age, position and even gender when using the Korean language. These differences do not stand out when translated into English, which may change the authentic meaning and sign of the exact words. The statement by van Nes, et al. (2010) clearly supports my view:

Language differences may have consequences, because concepts in one language may be understood differently in another language. This is in particular relevant for qualitative research, because it works with words; language is central in all phases ranging from data collection to analysis and representation of the textual data in publications (p. 313).

Thus, I had to face the “challenge of producing meaning-based translations rather than word-for-word translations” (Esposito, 2001, p. 572) due to the nature of my data and the method of analysis. Not every word is translatable hence the process of translating was time consuming and demanding (ibid, p. 8).

I struggled a lot with translation since I knew that “meaning may get lost in the translation process” (van Nes, et al., 2010, p. 313). I agree with Nurjannah, et al. (2014) that “[t]he meaning of these words (data) must be interpreted correctly or the results of the study will be adversely affected” (p. 3) as well as the “ethical adequacy” (Shklarov, 2007, p. 529). I sent the Korean transcripts to every participant and ask if they wanted to see the parts that were translated into English. Those who asked for the English version received an electronic copy and were asked to provide feedback for member checking. Of course, not all participants wanted and/or read the English transcription however those who did read the English version approved my account of the translation. I notified them that the English version may have lost some richness and true meaning and if they could catch any, comments would be appreciated. I also randomly selected parts of my translation and tried to back-translate those sections to ensure accuracy and credibility (Esposito, 2001). Keeping in mind that the potential for miscommunication exists, I carefully selected words for the best possible translation within my power to keep the data accurate - “both technically and

conceptually” (Nurjannah, et al., 2014, p. 1). In order to keep the data lively and as authentic to the context as possible, I deliberately chose Korean pseudonyms for all my participants; those participants who wanted to come up with their own pseudonyms were asked to pick a Korean name. This decision I made goes against Śliwa & Johansson’s (2014) assertion that using English pseudonyms helps to “avoid inadvertently revealing too much participant information” (p. 1140). Though I understand where Śliwa & Johansson are coming from, I did not want to lose the contextual information of my participants’ stories by using English pseudonyms.

I am aware of the fact that preserving the originality of any kind of data is nearly impossible, especially qualitative data such as spoken words and stories. Yet I believe it could be minimised by going through validation check with participants since getting their approval means securing credibility of the study. To maintain research integrity in translating data, I had to be reflexive; I saw myself as a bilingual researcher who faced “two conflicting perceptions of ...her role: the neutral role of a faithful translator versus the active role of a creative researcher” (Shklarov, 2007, p. 533). Though I was put in a tough position, there were, of course, positive sides to being a bilingual: my “ability to comprehend and negotiate the two ethical perspectives represent[ed] a unique asset and a significant advantage” (ibid, p.534). Crane, et al. (2009) assert that the process of translation encourages the researcher to be more critically reflexive. Difficult though it may be, this “allow[s] for the production of new and hybrid spaces of understanding that cut across linguistic and cultural borders” (ibid, p. 39) which is crucial to cross-cultural qualitative studies.

3.6.5 NVivo

To systematically analyse and keep track of the data, I used *NVivo* version 10 throughout the whole research process. *NVivo* is useful software that helps analyse qualitative data

(Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Basit, 2003) by assisting the researcher to transcribe, code, categorise and store data according to themes. It also aids qualitative research by giving various ways of linking data and exploring patterns (Richards, 1999). I attended workshops on using *NVivo* and decided this was an effective and efficient tool to categorise and organise the complex and huge data I have.

My collected data, based on a situated context and exploratory in nature, were rich yet complicated. I was in need of an effective device not only to store but to analyse and amalgamate data so that I could present stories of ‘manager moms’ in an orderly manner. Also the complex conditions that relate to one another which were sorted out by utilising the Paradigm Model, needed a programme to display it clearly. Use of *NVivo* assisted my needs superbly; each of the coded concepts, categories, and themes were assigned different colours to visually help organise the data and were systematically stored. It also singled out words and phrases frequently used by the participants assisting the process in developing the themes.

Though *NVivo* may be useful in many ways, it does not analyse the data for the researcher (Basit, 2003). I first thought this software would automatically generate some codes for me to make my data analysis easier; this was not true. Rather, *NVivo* is a tool that aids the researcher’s lines of thought and displays them in a more efficient and effective manner. By coding and analysing data critically through *NVivo*, I managed to understand and visualise the data and generate themes throughout the whole of this study.

Fortunately, *NVivo* read the Korean language and allowed me to engage with the authentic language of collected data throughout the whole process of analysis. By being able to use Korean whilst processing data through *NVivo*, I managed to minimise the loss of rich meaning that the Korean language holds while analysing the data.

3.7 Research Ethics

During this research, I paid special attention to the ethical aspect due to the study being conducted in a different context with children being interviewed and observed; I had thirty South Korean participants including two children. I had to consider the cultural practices of South Korea since ethical issues are “situational and specific” (Sikes & Piper, 2011, p. 5). Understanding cultural context is crucial in investigating what is going on with people within complex settings and it helps the researcher to be ready for culture-specific ethical issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Holliday, 2007; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Gaining access through participants’ consent and abiding by the rules and cultural norms are the cornerstones of conducting research. Hence, I allot this section to research ethics that I followed whilst conducting this study in South Korea.

3.7.1 Ethical Issues in the South Korean Context

The research strictly followed the rules set by the University of Sheffield and the School of Education ethics code yet I was aware that even with careful steps, unexpected issues may arise, especially in different cultural settings with culturally sensitive issues (Hennink, et al., 2011). To assure the safety and anonymity of the participants, I constantly asked and observed them with caution during and after each and every step I took as a researcher by reminding myself to act reflexively; “constantly re-examining one’s values in interactive contexts” (Simons & Usher, 2000, p. 4) is required in order to produce sound data which is only possible when the process is ethically sound. Pseudonyms were picked by the participants who wished to do so and for those who did not pick a name were randomly assigned one at the beginning of data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were strictly practised throughout the whole of the study. I informed all participants that a pseudonym would be used to guarantee their anonymity and

confidentiality. Ensuring participants' anonymities and avoiding any harm in portraying their stories and identities were put as my top priority (Sikes, 2004). I made sure the participants received transcribed scripts of the interviews via email within a month after the interviews and I also informed them that a soft copy of the whole thesis would be provided upon request.

Trust was the most important factor for me while conducting this research with my participants; since the participants of this study were mostly women I have known through work and by personal acquaintance, I believe they were at ease communicating with me during and after data collection. However, I wanted to make sure this research was being done under mutual trust. I met my participants as much as possible before starting the fieldwork and had casual conversations on the phone as well. They were given plenty of time to discuss their questions and concerns before each interview, focus group, and observation. The semi-structured interview questions were flexibly designed and were conducted at venues the participants preferred so that they could feel comfortable enough to elaborate on their thoughts and stories (Drever, 1995). I understood that there might be certain times when they recall unpleasant or frustrating experiences while either teaching/guiding their children or learning English by themselves; I informed them several times that they could stop the interview and withdraw from the study whenever they wanted to. I also pointed out that if I spotted any condition that in any way hindered the participants to comfortably share their stories, the interview, focus group, and observation would be stopped immediately.

The second factor I was cautious with was the power relations between myself and the participants. I knew that the participants being acquainted with myself could be a double-edged sword. They might take this chance to discuss deeper private issues or feel responsible to answer the questions they did not want to answer. When I started my fieldwork, I did notice that those participants who knew me before, immediately engaged with the questions posed, however those participants who were not acquainted to me at all,

hesitated giving answers at the beginning; it was clear that they were not sure whether to give me an honest account or to conceal their deep thoughts and talk about others rather than discussing their own stories. To ease the tension, I decided to go ahead and tell them my experience and stories on living and studying abroad without my parents as a young girl, learning and acquiring the English language, and my know-hows in teaching the language; this initiated sympathetic response and participants gradually started opening up. I was even invited back by the majority of my participants to discuss more on broader topics and share ideas and concerns with them; I believe this study gave me the opportunity to gain many new acquaintances who I can share deep conversation with. It meant a lot to me since I realised that my presence helped the participants as well. The power we had on one another as a researcher, acquaintances, teacher, friends, and various statuses assigned by cultural standards all played unique roles in shaping our relationship.

This study focuses on South Korean mothers, therefore, it was inevitable that there were children around during observations since I planned to observe mothers teaching their children as well as them learning English using various tools. I also scheduled to interview two child participants. Except for these two children, none of the other children were approached to be spoken to. Nonetheless, they noticed me and I knew this could influence their behaviour. In order to minimise shyness and awkwardness, I visited the participants' houses several times and spent time with the mothers and children so that the children could feel at ease and get used to the situation with me in it. The children were notified by their mothers on what was being done. They had time to understand I was focusing on their mothers. I paid extra attention when conducting interviews with the two children participants; they knew me well since they both were my students four years ago. They actually enjoyed having conversation with me and asked me questions as well. The interviews with the children participants were held for thirty minutes maximum. I was careful in picking words and used friendly body language such as smiling and nodding to

show I was genuinely interested in their lives and what they were telling me. Mothers helped in creating an inviting environment for the children to talk freely.

As mentioned, the interviews were conducted in the Korean language. Since Korean and English are very different not only in language structures but in the way they are spoken, the mood, the tone, speed, and the level of politeness (honorifics) all affect the transcription and translation. I agree with Perlovsky's (2009) view that, "[l]anguage models are major containers of cultural knowledge shared among individual minds and collective culture" (p. 520) and so, wanted to keep the culturally sensitive uniqueness that was shown through the language spoken. I had to be flexible in picking the right level of honorifics I would use for the interviews; there were no problems with the participants I never met before since I had to use the highest level of honorifics, however, with familiar participants, it was rather a difficult decision to make. If I had used friendly (low level of politeness) language with the participants, the interviews may not have been what I intended them to be; they could have remained as normal conversations with little relevant information. On the other hand, if the highest form of honorific language were used, it might have been a bit awkward. As a researcher and as a friend, I had to juggle the power relations well enough by utilising the Korean language skilfully to benefit both parties, which was a tough job.

Situating this study in such a unique and dynamic society, where old Confucian value still governs the nation and people's everyday conduct, was not an easy task since South Korean people are generally reserved and tend not to share sensitive issues with others yet at the same time, they are truly passionate and animated beings. Talking about their children's educational management, daily conducts of South Korean 'manager moms', and their perspectives on themselves and their lives may have sounded challenging to those mothers since these could be seen as private matters. There were participants who did not wish to be categorised as 'manager moms' though their actions and speech indeed were that of a 'manager mom'. Knowing this, I approached my participants with an open mind, carefully

chosen words and level of language, and respect towards the time and stories they shared to contribute to this study.

3.7.2 Researcher Ethics

I find the need to address my background to validate my position. Though I was born in South Korea, I grew up in the United States with Western education value governing my belief system. I believe I have a strong Western mind apparently influenced by the American culture and education I have so far received. I am an Americanised Korean and although I am familiar with South Korea and South Korean culture, many of my Korean acquaintances treat me as a different person. I believe the perceptions the participants held towards me had an impact on this study which, in a way, could be another valuable resource (Holliday, 2007). Sikes & Piper (2011) raise an issue on researcher identity that affected myself as a researcher: “To what extent local researchers are true insiders is questionable...more crucially, if they are trained in Western academia and Western ethical norms” (ibid, p. 55). I considered myself as an insider since I am a South Korean and know the culture well however this statement by Sikes & Piper made me realise there is clearly a gap between the way I see myself and what the participants expect from me due to my educational background. Furthermore, the expectations based on a Western ethical perspective and the reality I faced during field work was filled with cultural and behavioural differences that had to be ethically acknowledged. I took Sikes & Piper’s (2011) recommendation while conducting this research; they elaborate on the importance of researcher identity by stating that the researcher should consider and understand “to which of our multiple identities our participants refer at a particular moment, and to recognise that not all participants may refer to the same identity” (p. 58). This put me in a truly complex position and I had to constantly ask myself: ‘Am I still an insider?’

I started this study with the knowledge that this may yield different results due to myself being an unmarried researcher with no children. In South Korea, the social recognition of a married and an unmarried person tends to be different; when one is married, that person is considered a 'real' adult and as for the person who is not married regardless of his/her age, he/she is seen as a 'child', that is, not a 'true' grown-up (Kim, 2005). It is not only one's marital status but having a child or not also plays a huge role in forming general perceptions or preconception of a person in South Korea. Since I am not married and do not have children, the participants might not have felt like establishing a close rapport with me. Knowing this, I utilised my status as a former English language tutor from a prestigious South Korean institution to bridge the gap these mothers may have felt towards me. This does not mean I imposed authority as a teacher to my participants; I sincerely shared my experience and I felt they have benefited from it. I believe it was necessary for them to learn more about me and it played a role so that the participants could trust me and build a positive relationship with me.

Since I personally knew many of the participants, I had to keep reminding myself that I was interviewing them as a researcher. In order to shape this study as a valuable asset in understanding 'manager moms', cautious movements had to be taken when conducting interviews with questions that encourage the participants to share their ideas willingly and openly; due to our relationship, I had to make sure I not only protect my participants' rights and safety but guide myself from biased perceptions. I believe research ethics should not only cover the participants' safety but must also accommodate the researcher's ethical beliefs and well-being. After all, ethical issues must be handled as the most important part of research process to ensure the trustworthiness of a study (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012).

I am held responsible for the choices I made in representing my participants in this study; though I gained permission to conduct research on the stories and experiences of their lives, their stories were interpreted by my perception of their accounts which meant at some point, the line was blurred as to whom this research belongs. The reflective conversation I had

with my participants helped me realise that due to myself being a Korean, I framed the questions differently and placed priorities differently which led me to structure and understand this study differently. Because I locate myself in this research alongside my participants, I see that the knowledge constructed by this research is shared between the researcher and the participants.

Since “[r]esearch is a process of ongoing dialogue and collaboration between and among us” (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012, p. 78), I tried to be flexible and open not only to my participants but to myself so that I could continuously reflect back. Self-reflection is indispensable to justify the researcher’s interpretation to create new meanings from the findings (Miller, et al., 2012; Kemmis, 1980). Due to my presence and my background affecting the whole of the study, being reflexive was vital.

3.8 Researcher Reflexivity and Research Quality

It is essential to understand where the researcher is coming from (Sikes, 2004) not only for the research but also for the researcher to better understand and reflect on his/her work and self. Reflecting on “one’s own beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research” (Hammond & Wellington, 2013, p. 129) leads to introspection which then affects the researcher to take better actions in future studies. Reflexivity is this process of examination of reflecting back and moving forward with it. It is not only looking at each steps one has taken during research but it assists one to step “further back and examine the person making the judgements” (ibid, p. 129). ‘How does my knowledge affect this study and how will this research influence me to better myself as a researcher?’ was the core question asked to myself to be a reflexive researcher.

The first reason I wanted to focus on ‘manager moms’ was due to my mother and sister; I always wondered why my mother gave up her career as a promising school teacher and

again when my sister quit her high-profile job, I had to ask this question. They would just laugh and say I would not understand it till I become a parent. The question lingered in my mind for a long time. When I started working as an instructor in a prominent private school, I had several opportunities to meet mothers of my students. They would say that since they gave up their career, now their purpose in life was to support their children to succeed academically. They have sparked my curiosity further and I had to ask why; I wanted to know why.

While conducting this study, I had a good reason to constantly reflect back; I was dealing with sensitive issues. I was talking about my mother, my sister, my friends, my colleagues and their sisters and family members. I was discussing their lives and the reason why they have chosen to live as 'manger moms'. I did not want to portray such important issue with a narrow mind. Thus, I met my participants and tried my best to share and connect with them so that what I say in this thesis really makes sense to them as well. I believe being reflexive does help overcome researcher bias (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) since continually questioning self and looking back to better one's action and understanding indeed assisted me in staying focus and critical. Moreover, researcher reflexivity helps gain trustworthiness (Hammond & Wellington, 2013).

In order to keep myself alert and reflexive throughout the study, I have kept a research diary (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). I wrote about what I learned, thought, saw, understood, and felt during my research process and my emotional status as well. I scribbled in both English and Korean, drew pictures, sometimes just wrote a word or a short sentence; I was shocked, surprised, happy, depressed, and upset conducting this study and wanted to express how this shaped and developed myself as a South Korean, a teacher and a researcher. I wanted to see if this has helped me in understanding other people living in different contexts. With these in mind, I questioned myself; what do I really want to find out and learn from this study? Is this research going to assist someone somehow? To give myself answers to these questions, I allowed myself some time to reflect back by jotting down my thoughts and writing memos

to myself and consulting my mother and sister. The question; ‘What was I looking for and what have I found/learned today?’ was asked every day during the data collection period. Revisiting my research questions helped me get closer to the phenomenon. This process of constant reflection got me through each chapter of this thesis and assisted me in trusting the methodology and methods I used.

While collecting data, I spent a lot of time with my participants. I hung out with them and had lunch and tea, chatted about living abroad, and also went shopping together. Though this was part of my observation for this study, I felt like I was there as their friend. I sometimes felt my position was quite equivocal during this time. I was not just peeking through my participants’ lives as a researcher but I was clearly there as a friend joining in activities and participating in making decisions every now and then. Picking up children from schools and taking them to cram schools, meeting mothers’ groups and listening to their conversation, reading their logs, and going to their homes to observe were all very private deeds. My participants trusted me by inviting me to witness and note their lives; I realised how sensitive it could be and tried my best not to intrude upon their daily doings (Sikes, 2004). I was extra careful and cautious which I believe was the reason why participants were eager to have me around.

My participants got back to me and conveyed their thoughts on the interviews, focus groups, and observations. Most of them really enjoyed sharing their stories and said participating in the study actually helped relieve their stressed minds. They said it was a good chance to reconfirm they were not the only mothers struggling with the same issue. I did get a negative feedback from a particular participant; she said the questions I asked were too narrow in her opinion and because of the narrowness she did not have the chance to share broader ideas that she wanted to. I gladly took all the comments and feedback as a chance to enhance my work and myself. Amongst my participants, Haeju and Hani were the most active ones in giving me suggestions and they actually encouraged me with unique insights and advised me to watch particular documentaries that could assist my study. They would

call or text me often and impressed me by saying that the interviews pressed them in a positive way to think more deeply about the South Korean society and the Confucian ideals that govern the people and South Korea's education.

Interaction with my participants kept me focused; I managed to stick to what I wanted to learn from them by the narratives provided by them. They were all sincere and attentive to the issue presented which directed the interviews into dimensions I wanted to explore such as their concerns and actions, events and contexts. I paid attention not only to what they said and why they said what they said but also focused on how they narrated their stories by being attentive to the particular language and words they used, when they paused and/or laughed, and also the body languages they displayed. I did not want to alter the originality of the data therefore I had to be observant when it came to the meanings of the spoken words, body languages, facial expressions, pauses, tones and speed. I believe all these led to enhancing the quality of this study. Furthermore, multiple sources of data such as interviews, focus groups, observations and logs/diaries help counter the limitations by providing different views. Conducting a purely qualitative study, my intention was not to generalise the data, rather offer an analytic insight into the phenomenon that could help readers to understand the findings to their own contexts. As Sikes (2004) asserts, "[t]his is not a simple and straightforward matter and there are no answers that are applicable in all situations either" (p. 32); therefore, employing various methods enriched the participants' stories and opened a door for the readers to think about this phenomenon in their cultural settings.

Balancing participants' voices and my own understanding of them was a difficult and time consuming task since I struggled to find a systematic form of presenting rich, authentic data. I knew I had to embrace my own positionality and inscribe it the way I believe was true (Sikes, 2004). After what felt like a painstakingly long time looking into various methods of data presentation, I decided to formulate a simple model, an adaptive form of the Paradigm Model, which was an efficient way to display all this in a clear manner.

My research journal and field notes also greatly assisted me in staying reflexive. After each period of field work, I came back home and wrote brief memos and notes on how I felt, what I saw, the communication between the participant(s) and myself. My personal values and biases appeared throughout the study and I acknowledge that my ontological and epistemological perceptions were impossible to avoid. I trust Greenbank's (2003) claim that the focus should not be on researcher bias but on "adopt[ing] a reflexive approach that is clearly articulated in their writing" (p. 798).

This study was guided by the paradigm discussed above which I believe was an appropriate fit to the scope of the research based upon the ethical standards. I did my best to situate myself honestly and ethically and probed my research questions and methods throughout the whole of this study. This research was made possible by a collection of ideas from everyone who participated and contributed in generating knowledge that I believe to be trustworthy. The next chapter focuses on the findings, analysis, and discussion of this study.

CHAPTER 4 Results and Discussion

This chapter gives a detailed account of the findings obtained from the collected data ¹², the process of analysis I went through in order to extract core themes, and discussion based on a model developed which led to conceptualising a theory. Each core theme is introduced through vignettes from the observations, written logs that supplemented the interviews, and field notes I took.

4.1 Process of Analysis

I elucidate the process of data analysis in this sub-section before presenting the data collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and diaries. The initial means implemented to deconstruct the raw data was through line-by-line coding; I searched for repeated words and phrases by forcing my attention to certain descriptive stories and ideas. The second step of the coding process involved applying pattern coding to generate categories and themes according to similar patterns which involved clustering and reducing the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was done by grouping particular paragraphs and/or lines of similar ideas that relate to one another. I connected and enriched the relationships amongst themes that developed through the coding process by selecting the most useful codes that stood out to represent the others and persistently tested them by revisiting the raw data. This was followed by theoretical coding where I synthesised and conceptualised the discovered relationships and developed explanations. I then attempted to theorise the findings by coming up with a systematic model based on an adapted version of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) Paradigm Model (see 3.6.2)

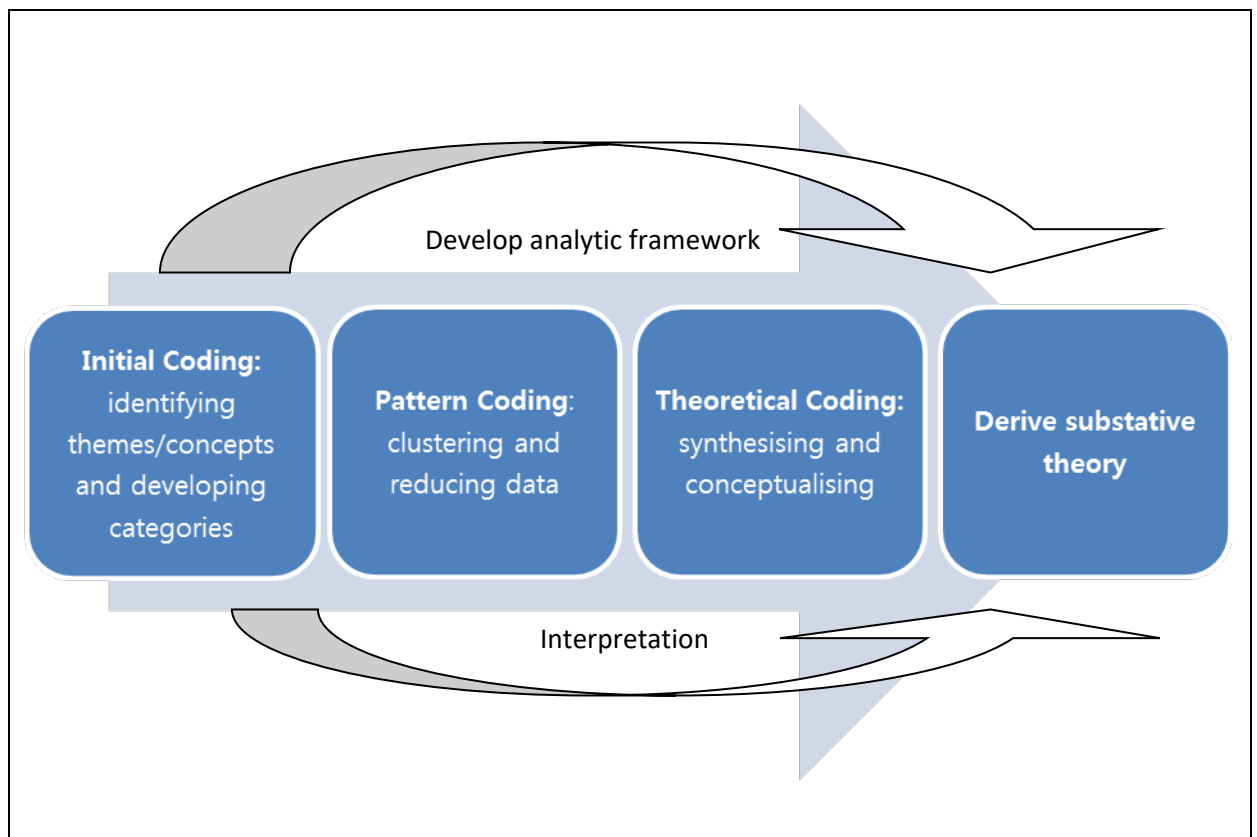
¹² All names used in this research are anonymised by pseudonyms.

All direct quotes by participants used in this research were translated from Korean language to English; one particular observation was an exception since the participants spoke English during the observation (see 4.8 vignette).

which I titled '*The Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms*' (see p. 217 Figure 4.2). Core themes were formed through theorising which became the basis of the model I produced. Since theoretical sensitivity (Strauss, 1987) is needed in order to accommodate the dynamics of the coding process, I constantly went back to the raw data to make sure the themes matched with the participants' stories. This chapter is presented in the order of the themes developed based on the flow of the adapted Paradigm Model.

While analysing data, I have constantly asked myself, 'What is really going on? Am I interpreting data the way my participants agree with? Will this interpretation of mine combined with literature and research framework be understandable to others?' These ongoing questions kept me focused and gave me the opportunity to continuously reflect throughout the whole of my research. The progressions I have taken to analyse data are shown below (see p. 126 Figure 4.1). This entire process was supported by the use of software, *NVivo 10* (see 3.6.5).

Figure 4.1 Process of Analysis



4.2 Presentation of the Data

I have derived five main themes out of the vast amount of data collected. Here, I present the key findings in connection with the main themes in conjunction with discussion of the results. The five main themes cover various forces influencing the phenomenon and the actions taken by the ‘manager moms’ as well as the values resulting from these activities which are discussed in relations to literature.

This study is empirically grounded drawing on concepts such as the spread of English as a global language weaving into Korean Confucian values. I define these as the macro and meso forces that drive the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon. The micro level force represents

individual desire to become ‘successful manager moms’ in a society where Confucian ideals and the impact of globalisation shape people’s lives.

I was fortunate to conduct the fieldwork with my participants during the summer vacation period. This period is a truly intense time in South Korea for students of all age and their mothers since this is when they start preparing for the next semester and plan out study strategies (Kim, M., 2009; Kim, 2007; Kim, 2004) . The ambience at large around this time of the year is the prerequisite learning of English and mathematics by attending private cram schools, hiring private tutors and/or going on short-term overseas study. I captured the intense lives of my sample of ‘manager moms’ and their children throughout the whole summer of 2014. Their daily experience and stories are systematically presented and discussed in this chapter.

4.3 Core Phenomenon

This study examined the reasons why and how ‘manager moms’ of South Korea play such a crucial role in their children’s educational journeys. To comprehend their lives as ‘manager moms’ and grasp the drivers for this phenomenon, I structured the themes according to different conditions based on the research questions I seek to answer.

The core phenomenon I investigated was on the rise of South Korean ‘manager moms’ dedicating themselves to their children’s education by taking various actions such as forming moms’ cliques and involving themselves in a truncated version of lifelong learning in order to re/learn the English language. This altogether affects the South Korean society and adds to the concept of language shaping society by illustrating how language and language education, be it mother tongue or foreign languages, influence people’s everyday lives, behaviours, and perceptions in various contexts (Blommaert, 2010).

In order to assure and clearly define the core phenomenon of this research, the research questions are revisited:

- 1) What is the importance of English language education in South Korean society?
- 2) How is this South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon shaping, and at the same time being shaped by society?
- 3) What roles do South Korean ‘manager moms’ play in children’s education?
 - How do these mothers position themselves in teaching and learning English?
- 4) How does being ‘manager moms’ shape these mothers’ own educational journeys?
 - What does learning English language for a short period of time mean to these mothers and how do they perceive it?
 - What is the significance of ‘short-term’ lifelong learning of English language for these mothers in the South Korean context?

Driven by these research questions as the basis for the study, the core findings and discussion are presented in the next sections.

4.4 Theme 1: Driving Forces behind the Phenomenon

4.4.1 ‘Successful’ Mother and ‘Successful’ Child

Vignette from one of the observations: Captured scene from a mothers’ group meeting in a café

Monday 28th July 2014 – a café, Kangnam, Seoul

It is a scorching hot day. 10am in the morning, four mothers who know one another well meet for coffee and chat. Their children are attending the same private English academy in Kangnam and the children are all in the same class (which means they are at a similar level). It seems like these moms are at the café for a light chat but in fact, as soon as they have

greeted each other they started discussing the summer curriculum of the English academy and the method the tutor is using.

Yunhee: *“So far I am satisfied with Amy teacher¹³... her pronunciation is good and she knows how to get attention. The amount of homework she gives out is not bad, although I think our kids can do more than she gives out. What do you think?”*

Mira: *“Compared to Kelly teacher last year, <<smiles>>I like Amy teacher better. She got her degree from America I heard and the sub materials she uses are quite interesting.”*

Yunhee: *“Have you seen the sub materials she’s using? I’ve seen something similar when I visited my sister in the States last month. My niece in America was using the books Amy teacher uses.”*

Mira: *“I usually ask her questions in English and yes, I do agree, her pronunciation is good <<laughs>>.”*

Somi: *“But I’d like her to push our kids more. <<pauses>> Kelly teacher was good at that. We should let Amy teacher know and ask her to be a bit more... demanding.”*

Mira and Yunhee: *“Yes, I agree.”*

This group of moms were not the only mothers’ group in this café. In fact, the café was full of mothers talking, reading, and checking their diaries for their next schedule. This café, situated in the middle of Kangnam Daechi region, which is called the Mecca of South Korea’s private education, is a place for ‘manager moms’ to meet other mothers and exchange information.

¹³In South Korea, teachers are addressed with the word ‘teacher’(seonsengnim) with their names. South Koreans do not call or address teachers with only names but the word ‘teacher’ always accompany their first, last, and/or their full name; this is a way of respecting teachers which is the cultural norm.

With mothers, it is different; as soon as women give birth to children, they are called by their children’s name followed by the term, ‘mom’ (umma). They are addressed as so and so’s mom (ex. Jaime’s mom) instead of being called by their own name.

The attention was immediately drawn to Jiho's mother, Yejin, who had just entered the café. The topic of their conversation shifted from discussing teachers to Jiho's grade (she scored the highest in her grade level last semester) and Yejin's methods on guiding Jiho.

Yunhee: *"Congratulations, Jiho's mom (see p. 129 footnote 13). We heard Jiho aced the final exam and ranked No. 1 in her class. How did she do that? How did you guide her?"*

Somi: *"What is Jiho reading these days?"*

Even those mothers in other groups gave Jiho's mom (Yejin) a look of admiration.

Mira: *"Yes, please share how you taught Jiho."*

Yunhee: *"You must be really proud of her."*

Yejin smiled and gently shook her head.

Yejin: *"Nothing big, really."*

The other mothers draw their chairs closer to Yejin.

Mothers sitting together discussing and sharing information is easily witnessed in the cafés of South Korea, especially in those cafés where cram schools are clustered and located (Kim, S. H., 2013; Park, et al., 2005). The conversations are mainly on educational information especially on the most important subjects – English language and mathematics.

Just by listening to a short conversation, it is easy to comprehend the stress and tension amongst these women and their desire to get more information out of one another. The so-called 'pig mom', the mother who holds the most information and who leads the group since her child is usually the 'smartest' within the group (Kim, S. H., 2013), started the conversation giving feedback on what she thought of the new English language tutor of the academy they send their children to. The leader of this moms' group in the vignette was

Yunhee. She was eloquent and indeed knew how to lead; she also gave out information other mothers wanted. Being a leader in a moms' group shows she holds a unique power over other mothers and in a way demonstrates she is one of a kind: a 'successful' mother.

4.4.2 Strong Desire to Be a 'Successful' Mother

My participants all wished to be 'good' mothers to their children. They wanted however to be 'successful' mothers as well. This desire to succeed as a mother meant different things to these moms; it meant being a part of a mothers' community, a sense of belonging within family, especially in-laws, and putting all their energy into something that could satisfy them. It also meant success for themselves; these mothers considered their children as their other selves. Seeing their children succeed academically not only meant family honour but was also viewed as their own personal success.

All mother participants from my study aspired to be a 'successful' mother by managing their children's education and guiding them throughout the educational journey (Kim, 2010; Cho, 1998). Living and being educated in a Confucian country where societal beliefs are based on the motto: *'education is the grand platform in planning out a country's future for the next hundred years'*, clearly states how special South Koreans view education, especially when it comes to important subjects such as English. By trying their best to fulfil their beliefs of becoming a mother who successfully brought up an honour student, these mothers go through various stages of an emotional rollercoaster. Different experiences they go through in order to be the mom they want to be, influences mothers to believe 'successful' mom brings up a 'successful' child. South Koreans have often seen and heard of dedicated mothers who sacrifice their career and time for the sake of their children's education which is considered as a virtue, South Korean mothers accept this quite naturally (Kim, J., 2011).

Mother participants Seri, Yunkyung, and Bobae's perceptions on being South Korean mothers are depicted well in their discussion here:

"Being a good mother and a successful mother at the same time is ideal. But it's nearly impossible. <<pauses>> Usually a good mother is regarded as a soft mother who lets her child decide what he/she wants to do... Yes, she might look good in the eyes of the children but then what about their studies? Their future? We (moms) need to be involved in designing our children's study schedule and help them build personal connections. These are what successful moms do... they lead their children and give them opportunities. A successful mother is looked up to by other moms and... she is an object of admiration to others. I want to be a good mom to my children but I want to succeed as a mother, too. <<laughs>> To tell the truth, successful moms are seen as good moms." (Seri/ mother)

"We (moms) are judged by everyone... by our in-laws, by acquaintances, and by society... they judge us, moms, by which school, which university our children get into. We are considered successful when our children gain admission to the best schools. It's sad but that's it. That is how they weigh our value." (Yunkyung/ mother)

"I didn't know until I had my sons that this attachment between mother and children is inseparable. I cannot imagine myself without counting my sons in. My boys are a part of me. They are me. <<pauses>> It's not about being a mom, this is about me. So, yes, if my children succeed that means I also succeeded." (Bobae/ mother)

To borrow Lee's (2011) statement, the best way for mothers to succeed in South Korean society is through children and, by striving for the best within this boundary, mothers establish their identity as South Korean women. In the end, mothers come to believe that through their children they see themselves again and learn to love themselves by devoting all their energy into children's education. One of my participants said that it was truly difficult

to face herself since she was constantly hurt by going through the challenging tasks as a South Korean mother but because she has found herself in her child, she constantly gathers up her mind and relentlessly invests in her child. The perceptions of the English language teachers were not so different compared to how ‘manager moms’ thought of themselves:

“The majority of the mothers I’ve met consider their children’s success in education as their own success. There is no difference in social class here. But it seems like mothers who do get financial backup by their in-laws are more sensitive to children’s performance and they are mostly middle-class to upper middle class mothers. I understand why they do this but at the same time, I don’t understand why it’s become so intensely competitive amongst moms...but if I become a mom, then I guess I’ll be able to understand them.” (Sora, English language teacher)

The desire to be a good mother and a ‘successful’ mother was the principal reason for mothers giving up their careers and becoming stay-home ‘manager moms’.

“Only mothers will know this feeling; the feeling you get when your child is an honour student and his name is put on the honour roll. It’s like possessing the whole world, a feeling of great achievement. <<laughs softly>> It is wonderful.”
(Sumin/mother)

This is in line with You & McGraw’s (2011) claim that “mothers are evaluated by their children’s success” (p. 591) and it is up to the mothers to mould scholastically successful children (Uh, et al., 2012). It is not surprising that they push their children harder to build up their educational portfolios. Societal pressures to produce a competent citizen and massive anticipation of family have burdened South Korean mothers to become a ‘super-mom’.

4.4.3 Passion for Raising an Academically Successful Child

Participants strongly agreed that they wanted their children in the leading faction; of course this was not an absolute must they said, but they admitted that they would like to see their children living as leaders. They all said that providing their children with a variety of choices (here, they mean academic choices) would open up more possibilities for their children to lead more comfortable and benevolent lives. They said it was for the sake of their children, however, I interpreted this differently; they were talking about themselves. The way the participants talked about their children was all similar. It seemed like they attached their ego to their children and strongly believed their children's success meant their own success. Seolhyun and Jihee's quotes nicely demonstrate how passionate they are towards their children's education:

"...then I won't blame myself for not giving him the opportunity and I'll also be proud not only of my son but of myself for being able to provide him with academic ability... and I'll finally have peace in mind. <<pauses>> I gave birth to him thus I am responsible for pushing my son to the highest level possible by giving him the best education. This is not only for my son, but also for myself. By doing this, my son won't rely on me and I'll have my life to myself later on. The only way to be free from all this nonsense is not running away from it <<pauses>> but actually plunging into it deeply and study everything in it and trying out all the possibilities!"

(Seolhyun/mother)

"A child is a parent's masterpiece and I want that masterpiece to stand out because that is what represents me. I want it to be really good and the best way to show it is through academic success." (Jihee/mother)

I wanted to understand how children perceive their mothers' management of their education. I present here a daily summer vacation schedule of Yunhee, a manager mom and her fourteen year-old son, Sangwoo, who is considered as a model student in his middle school.

2014 summer vacation daily schedule of Yunhee and her son Sangwoo

(5:50am - wake up and start preparing for breakfast, wake Sangwoo and check his schedule for the day)

6:30am - wake up

(7:00am - attend to husband getting ready for work and see him off, household chores/

7:30am see Sangwoo off)

7:30am - take the academy school bus/ sometimes mom drives him to the academy

(11:00am - check own schedule and get ready)

8:00am-12:00pm - English language academy

(12:00pm - meeting with mothers' group/counselling with teachers/attend seminars)

12:00pm-12:30pm - Lunch at the local fast food restaurant

(5:00pm - back home and prepare supper)

(6:40pm - go pick Sangwoo up)

1:00pm-4:00pm - Mathematics academy

4:30pm-6:30pm - Writing and discussion academy / violin

(8:00pm - ride Sangwoo to the library)

(11:30pm- pick up Sangwoo)

7:30pm - back home

7:30pm-8:00pm - dinner

8:00pm-8:30pm - English conversation time by phone

8:30pm-11:30pm - private library: do homework

(12:00am - prepare a snack for Sangwoo and have a conversation on Sangwoo's study needs and tomorrow's schedule)

12:00am - back home

(1:30am - bed time)

1:00am - bed time

*weekend schedule is a bit different: Sangwoo has tutorials with private teachers who come to his place (English, mathematics, science and critical writing). This is the average life of a normal teenager in Kangnam.

*The schedule in *(italics)* is Yunhee's.

The short interview I conducted with Sangwoo revealed his anxious feelings towards his mother's expectations:

"Mom gets really angry when I don't study. Mom sends me to cram schools and constantly checks my performance and dad is the guy who funds all these things. I am never in peace. I know it's not mom and dad's fault. This is the reality, this is what it's like to be a student and I'm not the only one suffering from this chaotic system but every time I'm pushed into studying... <<pauses>> I feel the centre of my life is not myself but my life is designed to fit the purpose of getting into the best university. I don't want to study when mom forces me to do so. Mom always says 'DO YOUR BEST!'" (Sangwoo/child)

"Yeah,<<laughs>> but you don't do your best all the time, do you?"
(Yunhee/mother)

"Well, I try! I know mom does this for me (talking to the researcher). I try my best because I don't want to disappoint you (Sangwoo turns his head towards his mother).

Yes, and of course, I really want to go to HM Foreign Language High School¹⁴.

(Sangwoo/child)

“Yes, that’s what we all want. We can do it!” (Yunhee/mother)

“Mom says she’s just helping me out but to me it’s a bit... frightening. Mom scares me sometimes. If I don’t do well at school, that’s like the end of the world to her. I understand it because it’s her goal and my goal to ace this exam to gain admission to this foreign language high school.” (Sangwoo/child)

“It’s our goal. We all are counting on you.” (Yunhee/mother)

After a short break we resumed our conversational interview; the dialogue presented here was the gist of the main points made.

“I don’t think my children understand why I’m doing this nor do I want to be understood. They will know when they become parents.” (Yunhee/mother)

“No, I understand my mom, I do. But many times I feel like she’s pushing...a bit... too much. It’s weird because I think I’ll be disappointed if my mom does not push me. Because that means she has given up on me. I don’t want that.” (Sangwoo/child)

Sangwoo and his mother smiled while this conversation was going on but I could feel the stress and tension they hold as a South Korean middle school student and a ‘manager mom’.

Later on, when Yunhee was having a one-to-one interview with me she said,

“It’s difficult, really. I’m always tired and sleepy... I only get to sleep four to five hours per day. I can’t afford to sleep more because my son only has five hours of sleep. Most mothers I know do the same. We don’t go to bed before our children do.”

¹⁴ Foreign language high schools in South Korea are speciality high schools famous for sending majority of their students to the best universities. It is extremely competitive to gain admissions to one of these particular high schools and applicants are expected to hold the highest level of English proficiency (Kim, 2007). There are only a few of these high schools in South Korea and only the top students can get in. These high schools are generally considered as a ticket to academic success. The foreign language high school mentioned in the research is anonymised.

I have to stay alert and sense even a slight change in my child's mood or attitude because he is stressed out and sensitive with his grades...all the time. He's only a middle schooler but we have set goals. He comes back home around 11pm or later and he immediately starts his homework so...the time he goes to bed is usually around 1-2am. During the exam period, it's even worse. But you know....if one doesn't live like this, he/she will fall behind without even having a chance to compete in the real world; this is the reality students and parents face in this country. It is really hard for both of us. But good days will come after all, don't you think?
<<laughs>>” (Yunhee/mother)

What Sangwoo and his mother said during the interview that he did not want to disappoint his parents, and her saying the whole family were counting on Sangwoo, is a clear example of practicing filial piety and collective familism, the two most valued notions of Koreanised Confucianism (Lew, et al., 2011).

What I learned from interviewing South Korean mothers was that they all had one strong goal and they were clearly conscious about it. They surrounded themselves with this target and immersed into it. The target here was, of course, sending their children to prestigious universities.

“As far as I can remember, since the day my child was born... all my attention was focused on her education. I've done my best as a mom to give her all the opportunities I can give. I'm counting on her to pass the college entrance exam with a high score and get into the top university.” (Gayun/mother)

Haegyo, who has a two year old son said she already feels the tension between other mothers when they meet or bump into one another at the playground; she said they observe one another and ask questions. Haegyo's explanation sums the situation up well:

“There are home-study materials for one-year-olds and some mothers hire private tutors... for one-year-olds! I know it sounds crazy but that's how it is these days. If

you want your child to outstand others, you need to start as early as possible.

<<pauses>> *The purpose of it? Well of course, to send their kids to SKY¹⁵ or Ivy League and be proud moms.*” (Haegyo/English language teacher and mother)

Haegyo said she was not happy with all this hassle, however she admitted that she would have to go with the flow and do as other mothers do and become a ‘manager mom’. They realise how stressful it is for their children however they feel the need to conform to what others are doing in order to survive and excel in this society. Raising an intellectually successful child gives mothers pride and sense of achievement; children, understanding this, want to be ‘successful’ as filial beings. Through this process, they try to shape their identity as ‘successful’ mothers and ‘successful’ children.

Some scholars argue that these zealous mothers bring negative effects into the educational community by further heightening the tension and aggravating competition that fuels the already feverish education market (Sorensen, 1994). The unique cultural identity that moulds the Korean mentality enhanced by global forces pervading society encourages competition, and adding to this, lives of overeager mothers shown through the mass media arouse anxiety of mothers and drive them to add to the ‘education fever’. Just by scanning through the list of books, TV dramas, and the news, it is clear that society as a whole is in a state of unrest when it comes to education; books such as *Kangnam mothers’ information power* <□□ □□□ □□□>, *Students who score top 1% are always backed by manager moms!* <□□ 1% □□□□ □□□ □□□ □□□ □□□ □□□ □□!>, *Mothers are the ones who make smart English speaking children* <□□ □ □□ □□□ □□□ □□□>, *English language education bible of Kangnam mothers* <□□□□□ □□□□ □□□> draw attention with provoking catch phrases. Furthermore, slogans in advertisements and school buses with phrases such as ‘*this is the bus that runs towards SKY universities*’ attached also unsettle mothers.

¹⁵ SKY is an abbreviated term used by South Koreans to refer to the top three universities in South Korea: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University. It is the combination of the first letter of each university and it also implicitly means that they are the most competitive and the most prestigious universities to get in, it is as difficult as reaching the sky.

Strictly conforming to the responsibility that rests upon them as mothers, wives, and daughters-in-law, South Korean mothers find their worth, their selves, by successfully carrying out their tasks within this obligatory boundary (Lee, 2011; Cho, 1998). They perceive themselves and understand their beings inside the circle of family and act as a part of a collective whole to contribute to the family (Kwak, 2002).

With regard to this view, South Korean women are still living in an age where ‘self’ as a woman is considered less important than the collective family; this is paradoxical since they are at the same time living in an era where globalisation constantly influences and change societies and human lives valuing individual identities. Through easy communication and international education, women have equal opportunity to thrive yet are expected in a way to sacrifice when it comes to family, particularly, children and their education (Park & Cho, 1995). The majority of mothers I have interviewed all benefited from these equal opportunities and a lot of them were fortunate enough to study and work abroad. However, even these women who have been exposed to Western education and values maintained the rather strict Korean way especially when it came to their children’s education. They conformed to living as a part of a collective family rather than living as successful individuals in workplace. The strong tendency to adapt back to the Confucian way is driven by the rigid beliefs and value system embedded within society for more than six hundred years (Rosenlee, 2012). Due to this social impact, many South Korean women generally believe what the family want is what they themselves want which was clearly noticeable in the stories my participants shared. They perceive that living as a mother means more to them compared to living for the sake of themselves as individuals; in South Korea women are looked at as someone’s daughter, mother, and wife (Cho, 1998). They tend not to question this since this has been the way South Korean people have been educated. Those who have studied and lived abroad may perceive this issue differently yet the actions they take still show they conform to patriarchal social system of South Korea. By settling in as stricter Korean mothers, these Western educated mothers armed with Western knowledge

and language, unconsciously mean to reproduce their status and opportunities they have had so that they can hand them down to their children (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2006; Levy, 1992).

4.4.4 Success and Happiness

My participants all agreed that they strive for the happiness of their family and the best possible way to fulfil this goal is to keep on doing what they have been doing. Their stories implied that happiness is inevitably tied to success in South Korean society.

Every culture has different criteria for success. It was evident from the stories of my participants that in South Korea, people tend to connect success with education and family background; this has been solidified culturally and has made people believe they need these as the conditions to succeed. Parents want their children to live a better life than theirs and so they try their best to provide what they think their children need in order to get better opportunities to have a better life.

What is this 'better life' parents want for their children? Is there a standard for leading a 'better life'? This is when happiness comes into the picture; living in South Korea and having been through the gruesome educational curriculum, parents know what society expects from them as harmonious members of society. In order to fit in and contribute as a South Korean, they are taught to be studious (Jung, 2013; Kim, M., 2009; Kim, 2007; Kim, 2006; Kim, 2004). Hard work is always praised and this compliment extends to the family. People accept the notion that hard work leads to success and since the appraisal encompasses the whole family, it is perceived that one's success means happiness not only for the individual but for the whole lineage who have supported him/her to become a successful person. Hence, individual success in South Korean society is perceived as success of a family which is seen by others as the whole family attaining happiness (Yang, 2011; Kim, M. J., 2009; Lee, 1998). The famous saying '*Happiness is the highest level of*

success’ is interpreted the other way around these days; people tend to understand it as *‘Success is the highest level of happiness’*. Few know the meaning of happiness but as human beings, we constantly pursue happiness and sometimes this has caused people to be obsessed with happiness which stresses them out (Tak, 2013). The societal atmosphere, structure of the system, and cultural background has made people to naturally accept and believe that success is happiness. Adding to this, it is an accepted notion that the most honourable way to succeed is through schooling and standing out.

The South Korean version of success and happiness are notions that cannot be separated (Park & Abelman, 2004). Furthermore, one’s success within society does not mean individual success; it is a collective achievement and a shared success (Yang, 2011; Kim & Choi, 1994). This collective success brings happiness to those who are related to this particular person by blood ties (kinship), academic relations, and regional connections. The meanings of success and happiness are different in this Confucian cultural setting; it means much more than individual success, it means the happiness of family members by uplifting the family name, a duty passed down from ancestors to carry on the family legacy. Therefore, in South Korea, it is nearly impossible to discuss these two concepts separately.

People know that being recognised and praised by others is not the optimum solution to being happy yet living in a society where it is seen as a virtue towards one’s family, community, and the nation, one tends to conform to what is expected of him/her as a filial son/daughter. Today in the South Korean society, there is a huge trend urging people to heal themselves by learning and reading more about arts and humanities to live a life that the self is actually the master of (Chang, 2013). However, this is a two-sided phenomenon; people talk about this movement and say it is important but at the same time, there is no change in education. They do not deny the fact that they conform to current structure hoping for their children’s success within the given system. Clearly aware of the importance of performativity in society they are living in, parents try their best to support children so they can at least get the opportunities to compete for the better (Uh, et al., 2012; Kook, 2007).

For a mother, this is truly difficult; it is mind-boggling and at the same time, fascinating. Her child is a person she has to push into the system, yet at the same time, he/she is the only person that she cannot exchange nor give up on. The child is the mother herself, her other half (Lee, 2011). My mother participants all talked about happiness when discussing success. South Korean mothers live in a world where success and happiness coexist (ibid), they live in a world where these two values can never be separated, and they devote their lives constantly searching for a better way to get both for her child/ren. Mothers have the ability to create an environment and the atmosphere for her children to immerse in their studies. It is no wonder they feel they are responsible for their children's academic success:

"We live in an era where success equals happiness. People say it, I feel it, so I believe it." (Yoona/goose mother)

Life as parents nowadays is complicated; they must face societal pressures and constantly try to meet the requirements set that consume their time, energy, and money. Going through this process to provide their children with better lives, parents gain the mind of the consumer. Since they have persistently spent the majority of their time, energy, and fortune towards their children parents of course would like to prove the effectiveness of what they have put in. This puts even more pressure on children and the parents at the same time. The more parents expect from their children, the relationship between them may worsen (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2011). But they still go through all this hardship to purportedly achieve the socially constructed version of 'ultimate happiness'. This phenomenon is ironic yet understandable. They say they know not everyone can succeed academically and they also say that succeeding scholastically may not lead to happiness but they still stick to education and cannot give up on it (Kim, S. H., 2006); the strong influence of Confucian culture that underpins the Korean mentality has led South Koreans to believe this is the way, the right way, of living as South Koreans (Kang, 2003). Many mother participants that I have interviewed said they feel happy knowing they are actually doing something for their children and that their effort shows through the progress of their children.

The majority of my participants said ideally happiness does not mean succeeding in life. However they all approved that within the South Korean context,

“Academic achievement may not always lead to happiness but it certainly leads to success. And eventually somehow... it will lead to happiness because it does bring you better opportunities and a better life that everyone wants. I am constantly witnessing it and I believe it’s true.” (Taeyeon/goose mother).

How much they sacrifice and spend do not matter so much since being able to support and invest in their children’s education itself brings happiness to the parents; they believe providing their children with the best education is the most solid asset they can pass on (Lee, 2011; Kim, 2006). According to Park & Bae (2009), academic credentials always follow one around that affects one’s self-esteem and familial status in South Korea. In Confucian societies, education is deemed as the best asset one can hold (Lee, 2006). South Koreans have believed that this is happiness and though they know there are different ways of attaining happiness and different means of happiness, they know that within the South Korean society, so far this is the best possible way to achieve happiness and this belief continues. The desire to raise ‘successful’ children stresses the mothers to be ‘successful’ moms.

4.5 Theme 2: Micro (Individual/Family) Level Forces

4.5.1 Lives of ‘Manager Moms’

Excerpts from diaries of two manager moms: a peek through the daily lives of Somi and Hani

Written on: Wednesday 23rd July, 2014 (Somi) / Monday 25th August, 2014 (Hani)

23/07/2014 Somi

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It's summer vacation. Every day is a battle. My time, my life revolves around Jaeyoon's (Somi's son) schedule. I know Jaeyoon is tired but seeing him improve day by day, two different minds play me all the time – the mind that says give him a break so that he can enjoy the summer and this other mind of mine that says he's doing well, keep on driving him so he could do better. It is really difficult to live as a mother here. I hope the day comes when Jaeyoon understands me.

If I push a bit more, I think Jaeyoon might be able to get into a Foreign Language High School. I know I shouldn't do this, but I keep comparing Jaeyoon to Seongyun (Jaeyoon's classmate). How does Seongyun always ace all the exams and rank No. 1 all the time? I really envy Seongyun's mom.

25/08/2014 Hani

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It was during summer vacation that I met my participants. Simply put, vacation times are when ‘manager moms’ are the busiest since this is the time they set to prepare their children for the next semester and plan out a new schedule (Kim, M., 2009; Kim, 2007). For South Korean children, vacation periods are not for enjoying and relaxing; it is time for them to hone their academic skills (Kim, 2004). During this hot and intense period, I was fortunate enough to observe ‘a normal day’ of a manager mother, Hani. From early morning to late evening, her tight schedule was not a relaxed one. I noticed she had a small notepad and her son’s transcript handy all the time. She asked lots of questions in a professional way which indicated she has had lots of experience meeting teachers/tutors and knows so much about how they advise and guide mothers and children. Hani also had with her a structured plan for her child’s English education; she had laid out and designed her son’s future in terms of three months, six months, a year, three years, five years, and ten years. By reading Somi and Hani’s diaries of their normal day, it was apparent that lives of ‘manager moms’ were hectic (from field note).

4.5.2 Diverse Conducts of ‘Manager Moms’

“This is war, I mean, I’m in a serious war. <<laughs>> I need to be a strategic commander and fight this battle and win. I’m not in it alone, of course... I’m directing the fight and my children are the soldiers who’re actually in real combat situation. This is a momentous matter that will influence us. Managing my children’s education and designing their future is the biggest and most important business of my life.” (Mira/mother)

Like Mira mentioned, my participants were leading surprisingly hectic lives; this is an excerpt from one of the focus group meetings.

Yunhee: *It is just all very competitive, this business of children's education... it's very tiring and emotionally stressful. The competition for college admission is notoriously stiff but that's the way to succeed in this country. So, until our children get into university, our lives will be as difficult as theirs.*

Researcher: *Why do you think it is so important to succeed?*

Yunhee: *Well, we only live once and we want that once to be fabulous. We want to be known as someone, don't we? <<laughs>> I want that for my children, if they can handle all the difficulties to get to that place and I have the ability to help them, why not?*

Somi: *Yes, I guess that's life in South Korea. <<laughs>> Everyone does it and if we don't, then we'll be left behind. My son and I are already scared of our lives before us. Can you ladies possibly face 'sam-dang sa-rak' (three hours of sleep will get you into college, with four hours, you'll fail – this is a well-known saying for South Korean students and parents) ?*

Yunhee: *I'm already tired with lack of sleep.*

Mira: *We went through that 'study hard and pass the exam with high score' hell when we were students. Now, it's our children's turn. We don't have a choice, do we?*

Yejin: *I'll gladly give up my sleep if my children can get into SKY.*

Everyone laughs.

Mira: *Well, all we can do is to support them as much as we can and try to supply them with whatever they need. And of course, help them with their studies till they need us.*

Yejin: *I'm not sure if I'm going the right direction with my children's education. It's scary. I really admire those moms who know what they're doing. I don't feel like I can be called a 'manager mom'.*

‘Mother’s information and health, father’s indifference, and grandparents’ financial stability are the keys to making an academically successful child in South Korea’ (□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □, □ □ □ □ □ □, □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □); this is a famous saying in South Korea these days and all participants of mine agreed that this is true in many ways. This implies that mothers hold and design the whole of children’s education while other family members back mothers and children up by financially supporting them. The authority mothers hold in their children’s education comes with huge responsibility. They assess their own devotion by the score their children earn:

“Mothers are the ones who make children’s grades.” (Seri/mother)

“We believe that children’s grades are mothers’ grade. The more you put your time and will into it, the better your child’s marks will be.” (Haeju/mother)

Fathers tend not to interfere with this issue. He leaves everything related to the child’s education to his wife which is the norm in South Korea (Park, et al., 2015). This is the portrait of how South Korean parents these days play their role in a family and according to the participants, it is working well. My participants cannot and do not speak for the whole population, however, they do illustrate fragments of how South Koreans live, especially that of mothers.

“As a mother, I have to be in control. To live as a ‘normal’ being in such a complex society, we need to follow the ‘normal’ way of doing things and when it comes to children’s education, the normal thing to do is... do at least the basic things other moms are doing. This is how it is here.” (Seolhyun/mother)

South Korean mothers constantly push themselves to be educationally supportive and while actively ‘managing’ this business, they unconsciously learn a lot and develop their own

know-how in gathering information, guiding, and teaching their children. This quote from one of my participants neatly represents what these mothers think about their support towards their children's education:

“Good enough? No, that’s not enough. Nothing’s good enough.” (Jihee/mother)

4.5.3 Peer Pressure: Tensions and Competitions

A woman in her thirties with a luxury handbag clutched to her side walks down the busy street cluttered with cram schools and private academies in Kangnam, Seoul. She is looked at from different angles by different people. Some might see her as a sensible and fashionable Seoulite; others may see her as a middle-class lady with a good career or a woman from a rich household. But seen through the eyes of Kangnam moms, she is a typical ‘manager mom’ hunting for educational information or attending a mothers’ group meeting. This is how engrossed these mothers are; they view others as competition and they are ready to compete. They see a woman their age, they see her as another ‘manager mom’, competition. This tension between mothers is quite visible even when they are having a relaxed tête à tête at tea time; they smile and praise each other but some of the participants confirmed that they constantly compare what they are doing and try hard to get new information on tutors, books, and educational materials out of each other. When they are with the group, they try not to show their competitiveness (though it shows somehow) however as soon as they come out of the meeting with other mothers, they hurry themselves into finding more about what they have heard from the others. ‘Manager moms’ are always restless (Kim, 2008). A child’s performance at school creates personal connections which will last for a lifetime (Kim, S. H., 2006). The tense atmosphere can be sensed through my participants’ talk:

"I sometimes don't want to go to the mothers' group meeting <<laughs>> but I do because if I don't, I'll miss out on new information and will feel left out. Also, this is how we form a network for our children." (Jiyoun/mother)

"The tension is ridiculous and I really don't want to be a part of this mothers' group I'm in but I have to. I don't care if they leave me out of things but I don't want my son to be left out and feel lonely. I go for my son." (Seolhyun/mother)

"Yes, of course, there're pluses and minuses to these mothers' cliques. But I guess, it's easier being involved. There are lots of mothers who really want to join but everything must match if one wants to be a member." (Mira/mother)

Interviews with my participants revealed that mothers considered one another as friends and at the same time as competitors; they need one another for network, information, and consolation but at the same time they are competing against each other. Competition between children's grades has turned into competition between mothers' self-esteem and pride (Lee, 2011).

The more information she has, the more she knows, the more she wants for and from her children. She knows that her children would be worn out but she cannot stop. If she does not send her child to a cram school or private academies, she is so anxious and worried that she suffers from insomnia. Mothers suffer equally or sometime even more than children due to the stress they get from managing education:

"I do suffer from a depressive disorder... I'm not the only one. The majority of Kangnam mothers suffer from it. This is common around here and we are proud of it because it shows that, it is clear evidence that we try our best supporting our children's education and we are absolutely committed." (Seri/mother)

The more information they had, the more they felt anxious. The more they met up with other mothers and shared stories and information, their tensions and apprehension arose.

Nevertheless they kept on meeting all the time. In order to live a ‘normal’ life as South Korean mothers, it is ‘normal’ to actively engage in the never-ending cycle of the ‘education fever’ that prevails in society.

My mother participants all admitted they were greatly influenced by how others perceived them; they proclaimed that other people’s opinions of them had huge impact on how they position themselves in society. People habitually compare selves with those who are superior to them and this constant comparison provokes tense competition (Kim, J. H., 2011) which is what exactly is happening with South Korean manager moms:

“Constant comparison and competition is a part of our cultural trait. I do it, too. So I can’t blame people for thinking like that. That’s why if I don’t want that blame, I must teach my children to speak, write, and understand English at least as the same level that I am in. My mother-in-law mentioned that, ‘I don’t have to worry about my granddaughters’ English education since you are good at English.’ <<laughs>> That really stresses me out. It’s stuck in my mind and I try my best not to disappoint my in-laws. My in-laws’ expectations really influence the way I design my children’s educational schedule.” (Haeju/mother)

Due to this human nature, these mothers continuously feel anxious and are pressed into doing things other mothers do. This was clearly evidenced in the moms’ groups I observed; mothers elucidated that though they got lots of information and networking through these groups at the same time they feel stressed and could not stop comparing with other mothers and their children with other children (Park, et al., 2015). Many agreed that they could not leave the group since it provided an environment for them to keep one another in check while exchanging information and sharing a unique friendship. Stressful though it may be, they kept their moms’ group members near them as they felt relieved by their existence knowing that they were in a similar situation. Moms’ group was a work-place to these

mothers; they learned, made new acquaintances, got information they wanted, felt secure, and at the same time, fiercely competed against one another.

In a country where human resource is the largest national asset, rivalry appears more ferocious and the society runs according to this principle of limitless competition. The South Korean society is formed rigidly on social and financial status and the strict mode of the relationship between subordinates and superiors is embedded within the social norms (Kim, 1996). Living in a society where people are not generous or tolerant in understanding others who act differently, people tend to conform to the rules and structure the majority follow. Most of my mother participants wanted to be accepted as ‘normal’ mothers and to be one, they followed the norms set by society.

The peer pressure mothers get from other mothers, sisters, and friends not only influences their daily conduct but also constructs their identities. The identities they have had as women change greatly once they become mothers (Hays, 1998; Ireland, 1993). This culturally constructed identity as South Korean mothers adds to the pressure assigned to them and stresses them into a position where they are expected to perform successfully in delivering society with academically successful children. This dense burden is seen as a way to determine the qualifications to be a ‘successful’ mother since in South Korea, the mother plays the biggest role on the future of the children (Kim, S. H., 2013). The enormous pressure mothers get are well elucidated by Minju, Seri, and Jihee:

“I know people around me are jealous of my ability to communicate well in English and always comment that I am a lucky person. It is impossible to even imagine my child not getting the highest marks and underperforming in English. My child doing poorly in English class means I am a careless mother and I cannot bear people’s negative attention towards this situation... they will of course view me as a weird...ummm, as a bad mom. ‘Oh, so you can speak English well but what about your child? What’s wrong with her?’” (Minju/mother)

“Since my children have experience living aboard in an English speaking country, other mothers expect my children to excel in English. If they don’t get good grades in the subject, they will point fingers at me. <<nervous laughter>> I was diagnosed with depressive disorder and I couldn’t even digest food. I kept asking myself, is this what I want? Then I will answer back, I have to do this. I can do this as long as I don’t get exhausted.” (Seri/mother)

“When I first met my father-in-law, he asked me to introduce myself in English. <<pauses and laughs>> I guess he wanted to see if I fit into the family culture. I was shocked but I managed to do it. And my father-in-law is doing it to my son these days. Whenever we go visit our in-laws, he asks my son to tell a story in English or sing an English song.” (Jihee/mother)

Fierce competition is driven by the cultural background of South Korea (Park & Lo, 2012). Historically, since the dynastic era, academic examination was the only means for people to achieve the highest status and to serve the country which has been considered honourable till now; this is how people honour their family name and pay respect to their ancestors (Lee, 1998; Park & Cho, 1995). This strong tradition still goes on and at the same time brought competition and rivalry. The largest side effect revealed from the education feverish state is the ferocious competition that has compressed learning into tool for success. Competition exists between family members as well; it is common to see sisters-in-law compare their child to their nieces and nephews and grandparents play a big role in this competition. From the in-depth interviews with mother participants, it was understood that the best way to be accepted as a true member of her husband’s family line was by raising an educationally successful child since the child holds the responsibility of carrying on the family name and maintaining the status of the family (Cho, 1998). The pressure a mother holds as a daughter-in-law is massive:

“If you want to be ‘true’ elite in the South Korean society, you must hold a diploma from certain universities. My husband’s got it, now the whole family is expecting my son to get it. And I’m in the middle of this business. I have to get my son in the best university or else, they’ll (family members and others) think it’s my fault.”
(Taeyeon/goose mother)

“My husband is a graduate of the best university in South Korea. Of course, my in-laws boast about it endlessly. He has made them proud. But it’s really stressful because if our child cannot make it to that university, who will they blame? And...where will I stand? I’m already scared. I might have to consider giving up my career for this.” (Mihee/mother-to-be)

The burden mothers hold correlates with societal values; the expectation this Confucian society has towards mothers puts tremendous pressure on their shoulders (Cho, 1998). South Korean mothers are quiet yet strong figures and at the same time soft leaders of society where modernised Confucian beliefs are combined with globalised mind sets; these characteristics were revealed during my fieldwork conducting interviews and focus groups.

To draw a roadmap for their children’s lives could be seen as going beyond however in a society where this is part of mothers’ lives and conforming to parents’ wishes is considered as being filial, it is only natural to South Korean people (Lee, 2011; Kim, 2006). It could be argued that this is being done to satisfy parents’ needs yet it is necessary to understand the philosophy that underpins certain societies. Supporting as much as they can, believing and setting an example for their children are only natural predispositions of mothers. Managing their children’s education fulfils their emotional satisfaction (Kim, 2006).

South Korean mothers commit to their children’s education by taking it on as a ‘gendered project’ (Park & Abelmann, 2004, p. 645) as well as turning this opportunity to educate themselves. They perceive children’s education as their mission to successfully run the household. They see this as their duty; as East Asian women with children, they feel

obligated to do the best they can to succeed as a mother, wife, and daughter-in-law to uplift the family name and honour the ancestors (Rosenlee, 2012). Not only as a mother but as a woman, raising an academically successful child earns a mother reputation and respect in South Korean society. In this way, they unconsciously secure an untouchable position, their unique status, within the household and in society where ‘successful’ mothers are praised.

Mothers’ identities and family relationship cannot be discussed separately. When my mother participants talked about themselves, they did not separate selves as individual characters; they saw themselves as a part of a whole, part of family. They said they existed because their family existed. The “I” is blurred by the collective familism that constitutes the base of South Korean society. Therefore, as a mother living in a society where Confucian values are deeply rooted, seeing and understanding self through their children is only natural (Park & Cho, 1995):

“I find myself in my child. He’s like a mirror that reflects me because he is another version of myself, you know... I want the best education for him. I want him to have all the opportunities to learn things I haven’t had a chance to learn. Yes, so... in a sense, I’m doing this for myself um... to satisfy my thirst. My child’s life is a huge part of my life...um, no, actually, it is my life. I can’t just sit and watch. I have to be in it.” (Jihee/mother)

4.6 Theme 3: Meso (National) Level Forces

4.6.1 Positioning of South Korean ‘Manager Moms’ in a Confucian Society

<p>Important position of South Korean mothers captured in an advertisement (from field note) : Friday 15th August, 2014 – in a bus</p>
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I was on my way to interview a participant. I took a bus from my place to where we agreed to meet. As soon as I got on the bus, I looked around and took a seat right next to this huge poster advertisement. I knew it would take about twenty minutes and I knew the place well, so I relaxed and started to pay attention to the advertisement.

‘□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □’ (‘Mom is watching you’ or ‘Mom’s eyes are on you’)

This was all it said and below those words were a photo of a teenage student seated neatly in front of his desk full of English texts.

This was an advertisement for a private English academy.

To me, this looked more than just a smart marketing strategy to grab attention. It hits the core of the South Korean education by mentioning ‘mother’. This short yet powerfully effective advert shows the crucial role mothers play in children’s education in South Korea. The presence of the mother in one’s educational journey is tremendous. This sentence connotes so many different reflections of South Korean society - success, competitive atmosphere, pressure, sacrifice, management, jealousy, repayment, and filial piety. The heavy burden mothers and children carry is summarised in this compressed sentence but at the same time it is truly effective in presenting the South Korean sentiment. But does this advertisement really speak for mothers? What would mothers think of this advert when they see it? My mother participants responded that it clearly acknowledged the notion that mothers were seen as principal managers of children’s education. It strategically presented the power and status of South Korean mothers in a concise and strict manner.

This section discusses the meso level forces that affect South Korean ‘manager moms’. I aimed to answer my research questions in this section by apprehending what drives these mothers nationally. Unearthing what is embedded in the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon at a different level is necessary since diverse reasons and perspectives would enhance the richness of the phenomenon under investigation.

4.6.2 Korean Ethnicity and Mentality Affecting ‘Manager Moms’

South Korean society functions upon a strong relationship-based culture (Hwang, 1999); governed by the Confucian philosophy, harmonious relations and strong connections based on blood relations and school ties bond the people and mould a distinctive society (Kim, J., 2015; Horak, 2014).

“I want my children to have personal connections that can help him throughout his life. This is the reason why I am active in mothers’ group. I can help my sons form a good network based on similar academic and regional background... this is how this society works. It’s all about who you know. Ummm... and one usually forms good relations through his/her parents. The next stage is by meeting people from the same school.” (Seri/mother)

“People usually stick to those with a similar background. Same region and same university, they form their own league and hand it down to their children. So... people with good ties usually try harder to keep those ties by pushing their children more to maintain their status and relationships. I think....umm, yes, I do it, too.” (Yunhee/mother)

Confucian doctrine, added to the passionate nature of South Korean people, has shaped a unique ‘Korean mentality’ and values that run alongside this mind-set. Having accomplished fast and effective economic development through education backed by feverish passion to learn for a better life, South Koreans have firmly believed that education is the best way towards success (Park, J. K, 2009; Seth, 2002; Lee & Brinton, 1996; Sorensen, 1994).

It is embedded in South Korean mentality that people tend to feel happy when they receive accreditation from others and many of them believe that they must be recognised by others to realise they are content (Moon, 2011); this has been a long custom of the society to feel happiness in such way. Self-esteem and sense of belonging South Korean ‘manager moms’

gain through managing their children's education bring great significance to their lives; they shape their identities and also experience special relationships by bonding themselves with other mothers and being recognised as active members of their own moms' group. They are also compensated by receiving recognition through energetically managing and leading this vital project for the collective family, the credit they rarely received in the workplace as women (Lee, 2011). From this, they gain their own sense of happiness and satisfaction which sums up the Korean mentality displayed by 'manager moms'.

The 'comparative culture' of South Korea, of course, has positive sides to it. It is true that healthy competition and comparison lead to development. However, once this goes overboard, it instigates favouritism and harms mental health of people. The attitude South Koreans hold towards themselves is a problem as well; people tend to recognise 'self' largely through relationships with others and these relationships are mostly based upon competition (Lee, 2004). Gaining self-esteem through other people's acknowledgment and reaction leads to 'imitation' of others, especially those who society perceives to be successful. This pushes people to think that whatever others do, they too must do it; this social condition is seen as common in South Korea (Lim, 2008). People are pressured into imitating others who the society recognises as being 'successful'. If one does not meet this condition, he/she tends to feel left out and/or is seen as a failure (Jeon, 2011; Lee, 2011; Kim, 2004). The social atmosphere which imposes people to live according to what is set to be a 'correct life' forces members to face the reality and conform to it since it is deemed as the easiest way to advance in such society.

South Koreans are accustomed to receiving praise from an early age when it comes to academic achievements (Park & Park, 2004). The need for this recognition still remains once they become adults; to be acknowledged by others, they tend to think from other people's perspectives and value others' opinion over their own. This has driven people to care too much about what others say instead of sticking to their own convictions (Uh, et al.,

2012; Hong, 2008). This Korean mentality is clearly shown in the conduct of ‘manager moms’.

Cho (2011) states that the reasons South Koreans study hard are to make money, gain high status, and be recognised by society. These desires are widely accepted in South Korean context due to the circumstances governing the society. Shift of educational system in knowledge-based society has altered the power structure of South Korea (Ciulei, 2013); the law of the jungle is applied in this highly advanced society where the maxim, *‘It’s good to be the boss’*, rules. Hence, in order to ‘be the boss’, one must go through the stressful competition assessed by standardised test results and ranking and endure the socio-psychological pressure until deemed academically successful (Kim, et al., 2010; Park & Park, 2004). This academic factionalism is prevalent in South Korean society which leads to a symptom called *‘ilyudaebyung’* (Lee, 2012) which can be literally translated into ‘top university pandemic/epidemic’. I may be so bold to say this *‘ilyudaebyung’* is an end product of South Korean mentality and I do see this as a huge part of Confucian ideology which is embedded within Korean ethnicity. The cultural philosophy and traditions that hold and shape the Korean society undoubtedly play key roles in the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon. Not surprisingly, they were found embedded everywhere in the data.

Living in a strong relation-based society, South Koreans put a great deal of their time and energy into building connections throughout their lives. The three core relations South Korean people care so much about are: 1) blood ties (kinship), 2) school relations, and 3) regional connections that accompany regionalism (Lee, J. M., 2006). Based on these relations, people share *‘jeong’* and flock together which usually last for a lifetime. Korean culture is dominated by this power; this power is embedded in family, work place, and the whole society. Koreans call this power *‘jeong’* (‘affection’ is the closest possible English word to it). A strong emotional relationship tied between and amongst members of any sort of group. South Korea is a very exclusive and cliquish society. This *‘jeong’* culture very often leads to people interfering with others’ business. However, through these strong

relations, people understand and identify themselves and learn how society they belong to functions and how to succeed in it.

The three most frequently mentioned concepts while talking about Korean ethnicity were academic elitism that has sprung mainly from the meritocratic social atmosphere, comparison and competition, and strong collectivism based on relations. It is almost impossible to achieve success alone these days; in order to exercise influence in the South Korean society, personal connections, especially obtained through one's school ties, through extensive networking is a required condition and is seen as vital to be successful. South Korean society is very cliquish.

1) Academic success leading to elitism

"The elite course exists...yes... living in Kangnam area is an essential point in getting into these courses. People believe these private courses will give you different sort of power and of course, get you into the top universities. People view those who can afford these elite courses are intelligent and it leads to power. But isn't it the same everywhere?" (Hani/mother)

2) Constant competition and comparisons

"Yes, there is also fierce competition amongst mothers and we always compare. I am stressed ... very stressed. But I try to enjoy this or else, I won't be able to survive till my child enters university. You know, if you cannot get out of it, you better face it directly and enjoy it." (Taeyeon/goose mother)

3) Strong collectivism

"It's all for the family. I do not see this (child's education) as individual quest. We are all in it as a united family." (Sumin/mother)

4.6.3 'Manager Moms', Guardians of Korean Confucianism

Korean value, culture, and ethnic mentality cannot be discussed without bringing Confucianism into light. Confucian philosophy is so deeply rooted in people's lives that it is hard to realise their daily conducts are grounded in this value. The cultural beliefs have shaped South Korean people and society for a long time since the beginning of Chosun Dynasty (Shim, 2001; Park & Cho, 1995). Tu's (1996) assertion that, "Confucianism was not only a moral-spiritual faith but a functioning ideology of the ruling elite" (p. 82) in Korea backs my claims while re-assuring this philosophy still governs the people and holds the elite-driven society till now. Confucianism has administrated Korean society both spiritually and politically; it has been the guiding light for the people.

I argue that Confucian ideals heavily embedded in the South Korean society combined with the neoliberal market that governs the economy accelerated by globalisation have reformed South Korean society in its modern state; a state where success through strict and rigorous education has been set as a norm and begat education fevered 'manager moms' (Kim, et al., 2005). I tie in the Korean Confucianism with academic credentialism to discuss South Korean education; traditionally, the classical scholastic attitude has been deeply rooted in the Korean value system which has been highly valued due to profound respect towards learning (Lee, 2006) which still firmly runs in South Korean mentality and society. Under the notion that Korean Confucianism emphasises much on the formal educational system, society has naturally placed the prestige of institutions and social status built up by the top schools in a different class. Therefore, first-class universities are seen as elite schools one must attend in order to be offered qualification to be called an elite, an academically successful person (Lee & Brinton, 1996; Robinson, 1994; Sorensen, 1994). This academic credentialism in a relation-based society creates an academic cartel that last a lifetime affecting people's social status (Park & Bae, 2009).

Adding to this, the gender roles assigned by Korean Confucian doctrine has influence the South Korean society to shape this new form of motherhood (Lee, 2011) which has emerged as a result of complex interactions with the globalising world. The role South Korean mothers play in society cannot be dismissed; the way they shape the field of education influences society and themselves as well. Simply put, the actions they take mould the society into becoming a different and unique context for all South Koreans. Behind all this lies the dominant national philosophy and the current wind of globalisation that has prompted the nation to develop further.

The uniqueness of the South Korean society lies in the cultural philosophy which holds the tradition of valuing education and collective members of family guarded by educationally driven mothers (Cho, 1998). Western way of life is constantly influencing this small East Asian nation through globalisation but it still embraces its distinctive custom. For instance, even those mothers educated in Western countries still hold on to this cultural value and actively engage in being ‘manager moms’; this shows that globalisation does change how people think and act but the strong Korean Confucian principle that embraces the society stands rigid. This demonstrates that South Korean mothers are guarding the old value embedded in society by actively ‘managing’ children’s education.

“I am willing to go abroad with my children for their studies. There are pros and cons to being a geese family. I know it won’t be easy for all of us, especially for my husband but if we can afford it, yes, definitely! Because, it’s for the whole family.”

(Naeun/mother)

This quote from my participant, Naeun, shows an ironic action taken by South Korean mothers on practising Korean Confucianism. South Korean mothers boldly give up their careers and take their children to Western countries leaving their husbands in South Korea since it is the husbands, the fathers, who usually earn the bread and fund the family overseas. The interesting point here is that these women would willingly give up their Confucian

duties as good wives, to support a larger family project by taking their children abroad, which is ironic in a male-dominant society. The in-laws accept this situation and are understanding when it comes to their grandchildren's education. In fact, many of these mothers think they are conforming well to the responsibilities as wives and daughters-in-law by taking their children to a foreign country and supporting them to acquire English language and guiding them into entering prestigious foreign universities; they said this was the best way for the collective family:

"We learn what success means in our society through our family... including distant relatives, especially from the elder generation. They act fast in accepting new ideas but at the same time they are still very old-fashioned and rely heavily on Asian values. It is my filial duty to reassure and set their minds at peace by achieving what they want from me as their daughter-in-law. I know they are all counting on me to bring up my son and daughter to perform well academically." (Jiyoun/mother) (on filial duty)

"This (to produce good marks in exams and succeed educationally) is the best way to pay back our parents and grandparents. Uh, we all know it... but it's not easy. Even though I don't like being pushed by my mom, I still understand why she's so strict with my studies." (Sangwoo/child) (on filial duty)

"My mother-in-law once said that she thought I was too strict in educating my son, but she admitted that when she saw my son's name on the honour roll, she felt happy and congratulated me on being a 'successful' mom. She said she was proud of me, that WE are the pride of the household! <<laughs>> You know, it felt so different coming from her." (Hani/mother) (on filial duty)

South Korean children also thought being academically successful is the 'best' way to pay back parents and uphold the family name. Sangwoo's quote directly shows this reality. South Koreans are brought up being taught that education is the most important part of one's

life and through learning, one becomes a true human and that is the basis of maintaining the family name with honour while devoting self to the state. South Koreans have believed and witnessed that consistent perseverance and hard work would bring success (Choi, 2014). My participants' stories clearly support the core element of the Korean Confucian ideal: filial piety and familism.

I am not saying this is all due to the Confucian emphasis on education; of course there are many other attributes to East Asians' high academic achievements. What I am highlighting here is that Confucian thoughts are undoubtedly one of the major drivers which underpin how East Asians act and perceive learning. A Confucian state of mind is inevitably related to this phenomenon since it has governed East Asian societies for such a long time. Strong families and strong education, I believe, is a major trait of East Asian people that motivate them to strive for their best academically.

It, however, could be said that strong Confucian influence reduces East Asians into a monolithic group that creates stereotypes of East Asians. The chosen metrics of 'success' here clearly limits East Asians into a certain stereotypical group of people; success should not be measured only by academic achievements however in Confucian societies, it does play a major role in determining someone's value and success which leaves the stereotype in place; that East Asian parents only care about educational attainment and high income of their children (Leung, 2002). Culture could be a major reason why East Asians perform so well scholastically but at the same time, it is also a reason why they suffer a lot to meet the expectations set upon them. I must mention that the positive perspectives that drive their academic success should not be overlooked; respect for teachers and parents, a deeply embedded work ethic, and the sense of achievement that motivates them to strive for better have indeed positively affected East Asian countries and enhanced their cultural integrity (Leung, 2002; Schneider & Lee, 1990).

Another interesting point is that mother's responsibility in managing children's education is heavily influenced by whether or not her in-laws support children's education by investing on it. The more financial support they receive from their in-laws, the more they are inclined to show and dutifully follow the Confucian ways of honouring and paying great attention to what the in-laws have to say. Thus, these mothers are in a position where they need to accommodate the in-laws' demand in designing the child's educational journey. It was truly interesting to note that mothers who studied abroad are actually stricter in sticking with the Confucian beliefs when it comes to children's education. In a Confucian society, the surest way for a woman to express herself is through her child (Lee, 2011). Through her child, she not only understands and reflects on herself but also gets to understand how she is perceived by others, especially by family members and fellow mothers.

4.6.4 Systematic and Pervasive Performativity

“It is impossible to even think my child won't go to college. He knows he is studying to gain admission to one of the top universities. The name value of the top universities means everything in our society and it is like shackles. It follows you everywhere, you are judged by the name brand of your university, and even your mom is evaluated by it. This is the reality in a world where academic success is seen as the best ability one can have. <<pauses>> It's not only the children but mothers are always... constantly assessed by society. I didn't know when I was a young child, but now I understand why my mother was so very into sending me to the best university possible. I still cannot forget how proud my mother was when I earned my MA degree from the best university in South Korea. And now... I want the same from my child.” (Seolhyun/mother)

This quote from my participant clearly indicates that one's value is judged by his/her academic performance to get into the top university. This practice prevails since educational performativity is seen as the standard of evaluation which elevates people's obsession towards focusing on the evaluation criteria and following the set custom (Lee, 2011; Kershaw, 2001). This in turn, strengthens the system and crystallises people's beliefs that performative ability indeed is the core asset to be recognised as a successful person.

The clear societal phenomena witnessed in South Korea such as the fame of private educational institutions in Kangnam district, rise of 'star tutors', and emergence of geese families are products of this prevalent performative society. Society systematically structures the standard it wants its people to conform to and this makes it hard to choose different ways (Lee, 2011); this pushes people to imitate others and follow the road the majority of people choose to go. In South Korea, this path people are prodded to follow is narrowed down to academic work. The value put into educational performativity has made Kangnam the most expensive region to live where education fever dominates the atmosphere (Lee, 2016), spawned the rise of 'star tutors', and pressured families to live apart as geese families.

The importance of performativity in South Korean society is evidently exposed; when it comes to exams and assessments that label people's performances, the nation is ready to show how systematic it is in administering it. The nation's excessive academic elitism and factionalism are thoroughly revealed on the day of the national university entrance exam which happens once a year on a Thursday, third week of November (Kim, 2004). The whole nation functions around this examination; all workers report for duty after the test-takers are settled and ready to take the exam. The news stations focus on the difficulty level of the exam and people flock to visit experts to figure out what to do next; the attention of the nation is on the exam results (ibid). For students and parents, this period is torturous:

“I stop cooking during exam periods since my child is very sensitive ...ummm ...even the smell of food distracts him. We try our best to accommodate our son’s needs. It’s not only him who’s stressed out during the exam period, but I can’t sleep either. Every nerve in my body reacts to my son’s emotion while he’s studying.”

(Sumin/mother)

Another indicator that points out how much South Korea values performative assessment is the PISA results; South Korea has continually placed itself as one of the top performing countries and this fact has driven the nation to be even more educationally competitive (OECD, 2014; Waldow, et al., 2014; Byun, et al., 2012; Kim, 2002).

Mothers agreed that they did not like the way the value and identities of their children were assessed by their grades yet they admitted that they were the ones who have conformed to the system and planned children’s educational journey accordingly. Children feel the pressure as well but in a different level; they see themselves being pushed by their mothers rather than society (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2011). According to my children participants, they felt they were the representative of their parents since they knew they were their mothers’ pride. Mothers and children recognised the pressure they received in different ways yet they both knew they should not fall behind in academic competition as it would greatly affect their future lives as collective family. As social structure that places heavy value on academic achievement has been firmly engraved and accepted as a custom since the 12th century, academic elitism has, to a certain extent, become the backbone of the country (Yang, 2011).

The answer mothers get from society is simple yet complex: academic performativity leads to a successful life (Lee, 2011; Lee & Brinton, 1996). This gives a chance to those who seek to improve their social status to be ambitious by gaining a favourable position through exceptional educational background. This widespread phenomenon results in intensification

and borderless competition driving the society to become highly educated with little value. Then, are ‘manager moms’ exerting an aggravating influence upon this academic elitism?

4.6.5 Re/production of Power

It is part of the Korean mentality to strive for the highest ‘specification’¹⁶; the public who are indoctrinated throughout their lives to believe people with the highest ‘specs’ are the ones who succeed, feel weak in front of those who hold those high ‘specs’ and easily accept them as elites, their leaders. American English is deemed as one of the most important conditions to make the highest ‘specification’; people with native-like English ability are perceived as holding higher socio-economic status (Lee, 2016; Shin, 2007).

South Korea has employed the English language as an effective tool for success and has accordingly made it into a symbol of power fit for the state of the nation (Song, 2011; Park, S. Y., 2009; Kim, 2006). I realise this is not unique to South Korea since it is happening in many other countries as well, however, I must say that in South Korea, the American version of the English language holds a truly distinctive status; rather than glocalising the English language and putting it to practical use, South Korea has adopted the ‘standard’ or ‘authentic’ version of English, especially putting emphasis on American English, as the ‘real’ English language. By underscoring the importance of ‘American’ English, the so called elites advocate Westernisation while at the same time, strictly conforming to the Confucian elitism. This puts English language in a position where it is valued as an exclusive property of elites. In an era where globalisation drives internationalisation and diversity of human agency, South Korea has accepted English language as a symbol of power and this is effectively used by the elites to reproduce the authority they hold; the obsession towards mastering American English undoubtedly confirms the tension between the group holding power and the public

¹⁶ Specification: South Koreans call it ‘spec’ which is the portfolio of one’s academic ability, educational background, and relational ties that are valued in a performative society.

who do not have such control (Choi, 2010; Namgoong & Lee, 2007). Those with power usually share similar educational and environmental background and are armed with similar foreign language abilities. They stick together forming strong group membership, enjoying the status as elites while preventing others entering their territory (Kim, J., 2015):

“It just immediately comes to my mind that whenever I see someone speaking English fluently, I see that person as elite. And I perceive that person to be coming from an aristocratic family.” (Younga/mother)

Mothers, living in a society where a mixture of Western ideas and Confucianism is deeply embedded everywhere culturally and politically, try to carry out the responsibilities and duties given to them by guiding and teaching their children American English. Fulfilling their Confucian duties by teaching and learning a Western language sound quite paradoxical yet at the same time, makes perfect sense. It is not difficult to find similar patterns in other Confucian countries such as China, Japan, and Taiwan; whilst maintaining the fundamental Confucian philosophy to govern society, they effectively compromised the lifestyle they have preserved and the Western way of living and thinking to perform better in the globalising era (Tu, 1996).

Analyses of my participants’ stories confirm that Confucianism still heavily governs the reproduction of the social status people intend to hand down to their children. I bring back the discussion on Western educated South Korean mothers to elaborate on reproducing the power they hold. Generally, it is normal to think people who go abroad to study would come back with new ideas and tend to be more open to different values however this was not the case when concerning children’s education. Ironically, my mother participants who received their degrees in Western countries were sterner in keeping the Confucian values towards their in-laws by strictly educating their children. The duplicity they display in leading their lives captured my interest. Whilst they practise a stronger Confucian manner in treating their in-laws, they try their best to plant Western practice of education into their

children in hopes of them adapting to the Western way and this being embedded in them so that later on, they can study and live amongst Westerners without any difficulties and/or sense of difference; the best way, they believe, is by supporting their children to master the English language. This gap explains the complexity these mothers go through in managing and shaping not only the children's education but the lives that they are living (Kim, 2006). They say they are educating their children so that the children can have better lives by giving all the opportunities to try out different things but in action, they are very conservative in designing the child's future by manipulating the education in the way mothers themselves want it to be, and that is, exhaustively following the planned system whilst complaining (ibid). After all, this is the way they maintain the order of a rigid class driven society which they consciously and unconsciously realise (Lee, 2016; Yang, 2011). To support my claim, I quote Eienstadt (1996): "[a]ristocratic and patrimonial tendencies remained very strong (in Korea) ... and the aristocracy was 'Confucianised'. True enough, aristocratic families and lineages continued to be much more important in Korea" (p. 176) however strong the influence of globalisation may be. Confucianism is embedded in society and, at the same time, globalisation is influencing the Confucianised people's lives (Kook, 2007; Robertson, 1992); it is essential for South Korea to accommodate both forces so that these waves of power sustain and enhance the Koreaness.

It is necessary to discuss the deep-rooted ethnicity of Korea to understand why this phenomenon is happening. Constant comparisons and the '*bbal-lee bbal-lee*' (quick-quick) syndrome play important roles in shaping the South Korean mentality (Kang, 2010). Winning and quickly presenting good results led to the economic success in the 60s and 70s (Bae, 2012; Lee, J. K., 2003; Choi, 1994; Lee & Park, 1993); this good intent has been distorted nowadays to gain power in this never ending competitive era, which has driven people to think that through ferociously pursuing education this could be achieved. The neoliberal society has encouraged people to feel insecure if they do not monitor and imitate what others are doing. Furthermore, it has left them to misunderstand and judge others by

which university they have graduated from and what kind of job they hold (Yang, 2011). People have conformed to this neoliberal thought and in order to keep up with the rules set by the brains behind this scene, they believe it is necessary to sacrifice their own careers and mainly live as mothers since this leads to reproduction of power. Through this process they learn to maintain their social status which they again will hand down to the next generation; an endless cycle (Kim, 2006; Robinson, 1994).

Regional environment, financial circumstances, and family background are all main factors in this South Korean capitalist state that instigate fierce competition. Capitalism backed up by neoliberal epitomes has brought the change in education where result is more important than process (Yang, 2011). Passionate mothers, who were also brought up in a competitive environment, have played a role in shaping the educational atmosphere even more ferocious. Within the boundary of neoliberal capitalist society uniquely situated upon Confucian ideals, mothers act as a medium for producing individuals the society wants (Lee, 2011). They do this to help their children live better lives and at the same time they are trying their best to reproduce what they hold; at the bottom of this 'manager mom' phenomenon lays reproduction of status based on Koreanised Confucianistic elitism.

Mothers, who have lived in this society and have seen and experienced the significance of power and status academically successful people hold, try their best to support their children's education. They are aware of the fact that they are restraining their children but still carry on since this is what they went through to get to where they are now. Once they start educating their children in the way others do, they start to believe that this is the right way and find the need to push their children further; this becomes their new job, a new career as 'manager moms' (Lee, 2011). This is not only about their children, this is serious family business. South Korean mothers are running a huge enterprise for the whole family lineage where she is the main planner, organiser, and manager who is responsible for carrying on preserving the family name. By diligently doing so, mothers gain their own power. Mothers create new power relations amongst the family members and at the same

time play a major role in reproducing the existing power and status the family holds in society (Park & Bae, 2009; Cho, 1998; Burck & Speed, 1995). This may be perceived as a bigger success than maintaining her career since this is ‘real’ power women in male-dominated society can hold; the soft power to lift up the family value through children’s education and reproduce and safeguard what they already have.

Educational Factors

The scale and style of managing depend greatly on mothers’ educational background and standard; moms who studied abroad and who graduated from universities in South Korea, differ in managing their children’s education, specifically when it comes to English language education. My participants have revealed that they desire their children to get into a more prestigious university than the ones they graduated from. This aspiration was greater amongst the mothers who hold diplomas from the top notch universities. They said that sending their children to prestigious universities not only is the best way to pay back their parents but also the best way for their children to lead good lives and at least sustain the lives they currently enjoy. My participants also implicitly mentioned another important reason for all this educational managing of their children; to save their own dignity by showing they have succeeded as mothers.

Environmental Factors

Environmental differences influence mothers’ behaviours. I noticed that manners of ‘manager moms’ somewhat fluctuate according to the regions. Mothers who were born and raised in Kangnam and still live there, who live in other cities (two satellite cities), who live in rural areas, and those who live overseas seemed they were following the ‘norms’ of the regions they were living in. The methods and disposition differ accordingly but there are many similar aspects as to how they go about managing. Their daily schedule looks very similar as shown in the figure below (from their diaries). Their world revolves around their

children; whenever they have spare time, they use it to meet other moms for exchange of info, attend seminars, study and prepare to teach their children.

An interesting fact is that participants from the satellite cities have mentioned that they were, to a certain extent, content with what they were doing as ‘manager moms’ in the city they were living in however if budget permits, they would move to Kangnam, Seoul.

“We have our own mothers’ groups... we gather and meet up for the sake of our children. We share what information we have and we support each other. Of course, there is competition amongst moms but we try not to overdo things like Kangnam mothers. English, too... we know it is important and we do our best within our capability. I am satisfied with my son’s progress. He is doing alright. <<laughs>> Compared to Kangnam kids, I’m sure he’s far behind but as long as he is learning something and he enjoys it, I’m good. But of course, if he excels in his studies and keeps on showing his interest in learning English, then I will do my best to give whatever he needs and wants. But this does not mean I will quit my job and become a Kangnam ‘manager mom’ for him. I won’t call myself a ‘manager mom’. You know, <<pauses>>... so let’s say we do exactly the same thing as Kangnam ‘manager moms’ do; there’s still this social stratification that limits most of us to be seen in the same level. Yes, it sounds great to have a son who holds a job in an international firm and works abroad but I think I’m realistic in thinking that I’ll be happy if my son earns good enough marks in English to get into a South Korean university.” (Younga/ mother from one of the satellite cities)

One of my participants, Mira, moved to Kangnam with her family for the sake of education. Her husband now has to travel more than two hours to get to work; but Mira said it was a good decision they made. Parents flock to Kangnam because they want to stay current even though they know it will be stressful to themselves and their children. They know the best academies, tutors, information and ‘manager moms’ are all there.

Passing on power within a certain social class, persistence of class hierarchy is somewhat fixated and it is not easy for others to actually climb the social ladder; but there is a chance, and that chance is given through ‘elite’ education; and it is believed that ‘elite’ education starts at Kangnam. Elite education here means gaining a diploma from a renowned university where you can make strong personal connections.

Children with parents who have prestigious educational background and/or financial stability generally have higher expectations of themselves which means these children feel more stressed out. They are in constant pressure to live up to the anticipation of so many people including their parents and relatives. They do not want to bring their parents’ names down by doing poorly at school. This is the major reason why they conform to what their parents have planned out for them and follow the hectic schedule; they regard this as their duty towards their parents.

“Dad is a successful man and mom speaks real good English, she’s smart. I am their daughter so... people expect me to at least be like them or better, you know. That’s really stressful.” (Dasom/child)

Significance of Daechi Educational District of Kangnam

In South Korea, when ‘manager moms’ are mentioned, people immediately relate them to ‘Kangnam moms’. Since Kangnam is seen as the region where the best education and information are provided, parents with young children always seek chances to move into this area.

“Kangnam is ‘the place’. Children there start English as soon as they are born and they consistently study the language going through English nurseries, kindergartens and even special elementary schools so their English is as fluent as those who have lived abroad for a long time.” (Sora/English language teacher)

“Yes, there are lots of twelve or thirteen year olds who score 110 out of 120 in TOEFL tests and you know, TOEFL test is for adults! This is what Kangnam private institutes do.” (Mira/mother)

“During summer vacation, Kangnam tutors teach efficiently and effectively so that the students are well prepared for not only the next semester but for the whole middle school years. So, in two to three months period, students get to master three years’ worth of study. Yes, frantic but students and parents here accept it and actually want more.” (Haegyo/English language teacher and mother)

Mira said that it is not surprising to see so many parents moving to Kangnam. The best teachers, the best management system, and the best educational materials all come together in this region (Kim, 2004). All these combined with desires of zealous mothers have created the number one educational district of South Korea. By moving to Kangnam and sending children to educational institutions crammed in the Daechi district, they not only provide their children with the best education offered but also start forming long lasting networks which are essential in re/producing power they yearn for; the Kangnam address means societal power (Lee, 2014).

Participants said they know they should not press too much on everyday results of their children’s performance but the reality they face leaves them doubtful; they cannot get the image of other children studying at this very moment out of their minds especially when they get to see students going in and coming out of private academies from early morning till late at night every day.

Individual desire, familial expectations, filial duties, and societal pressure underpinned by Korean Confucian values and impact of globalisation have moulded the South Korean society that heavily functions by the academic credentials of its members. This not only heavily influences the education sector but the whole society inducing people to accept and

conform to the notion of ‘education fever’ and how it shapes their lives; in the middle of this stand South Korean ‘manager moms’.

4.7 Theme 4: Macro (Global) Level Forces

4.7.1 What English Language Means in South Korea

Vignette from one of the observations: A short conversation between a manager mom and her child and how other people perceive it

Thursday 31st July – in a supermarket, in a lift

After picking her daughter Dasom up from a private English academy, Minju drove to a nearby supermarket. Dasom looked a bit tired but enjoyed the short break (stopping by a supermarket was considered a break to her). Minju, who holds a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from the United States, spoke fluent English and kept on chatting to her daughter Dasom (their conversation was in English).

“So, how was class today?” asked Minju while picking up a few apples.

“It was ok.” answered Dasom pushing the shopping trolley.

“Well, that’s not enough, Dasom. I want to know more, you see.” Minju eyed her daughter.

“OK, yeah, we learned the things you and I went over last night, the ‘past perfect and the present perfect’ and then during speaking class, we had a debate over ‘school uniforms’... so... I answered all of teacher’s questions correctly.” said Dasom, touching some displayed plums.

“I like that. That’s good. Anything you didn’t understand from today’s class?” Minju smiled and that smile showed how satisfied she was.

“Ummmm, no. Oh yeah, I need to prepare a power point presentation on ‘world religions’ for next class. Mom, you need to help me with it. I’m hungry. What are we having for dinner?”

After grocery shopping we were in the lift when Dasom started humming and singing an English song she learnt at her academy. There was an elderly lady who smiled and praised Dasom on being ‘smart’ adding Minju must be proud. Minju and Dasom smiled and thanked the elder lady.

Minju shrugged her shoulders and looked at me and whispered, *“Well, but most of the moms and children I know speak English better than we do!”* Later on, Minju explained that there are many mothers who used English with their children’s native teachers during counselling. She said that practicing English with her daughter was for the sake of both her daughter and herself.

This subsection discusses the question: What is driving South Korean ‘manager moms’ globally and what is embedded in this phenomenon in the broadest sense? I approach this question by taking globalisation and putting it into a local context and explore the local actions taken. In this study, globalisation is discussed alongside English language. I do not wish to claim that globalisation has brought in the English language into South Korea; what I am trying to assert here is that globalisation has further enhanced the dominance of English as the main international language driven by Western power and neoliberal economy. Globalisation has also affected South Korean mothers to take a step further and re/learn English and/or move abroad to English speaking countries. Globalisation is a term that can not be separated when discussing the English language. I focus on historical factors, cultural colonisation and its legacy of South Korea, and power dynamics created by the usage of

English as a tool for success as macro level forces driving South Korean ‘manager moms’. By inter-relating these notions, how the game gets played and why things happen the way they happen are discussed.

4.7.2 Power of English Language in a Meritocratic Society

In the midst of globalisation, English language has rapidly gained a special status in the South Korean society due to its academic and market value. Moreover, it has been effectively used as a tool to indicate social class and widening the gap (Song, 2011; Park, S. Y., 2009); rather than being treated as a communicative device, it has been used as a tool to maintain and check on the influence one holds within the community on the pretext of education. “English in neoliberalism is celebrated not just because of its functional value” (Park & Lo, 2012, p. 157), rather it is seen as a skill to master to maximise the value of human capital and gain upward mobility in society. Language is now perceived as a marketable commodity that contributes to maintaining social power and class. English language competence means better opportunities to the majority of South Koreans however the underlying political calculation of those holding power in society see it differently; for them, it is a device to maintain power and class which constitute the social capital of the elite group (Lee & Brinton, 1996). Interestingly, though mother participants elaborated on the importance of English as a global language, they also kept mentioning the elite status they hope their children gain through mastering English. Though it is evident that governmental policies and social factors have contributed to South Koreans being obsessed with English, there are other reasons for this phenomenon (Hu & McKay, 2012); to maintain the established hierarchic system, a tool was needed to justify the membership into the elite group (Song, 2011).

Ironically, the impact of globalisation in the Confucian South Korean society has quite unexpectedly revealed the ‘Koreaness’ (see p. 28 footnote 4) of the people; emphasising on

academic achievement while holding tight on to the global language in hopes to climb up the social ladder illuminates the success-driven society. The Korean mentality is exposed in the standard form of English language South Koreans thrive to acquire – the elite version – in order to compete and succeed in the context they are situated in. South Koreans have found their own way to embrace Western ideas and values through globalisation and have adapted them into the Confucian society (Green, 1999) which, interestingly, strengthens the Confucian beliefs. The wave of neoliberal globalisation has structured a new hierarchical social system based on the mastery of the English language. The dominance of English even impacts nations' local reconfiguration of social class and power since it is commonly acknowledged as a key mechanism for climbing up the social ladder in various societies (Mufwene, 2002). Empowered by globalisation, English language prevails as the leading international language with massive power.

4.7.3 English Language Education and Globalisation as its Agent

It is not only about success, said my participants; they said the reason why South Koreans were so immersed in learning English language was because *“it is only natural like breathing, it is a huge part of education and since education is a natural part of living, people just accept the fact that English language education is a must”* (Hani/mother participant). English has become so much a part of South Korean life largely due to globalisation and the importance it brings to the country it is only fair to consider it as a part of South Korean culture now (Song, 2011). It is commonly argued that South Korea has been colonised culturally mainly by America (Kim, 2003), a notion that I dispute since I see it as South Korea accepting and adapting various conceptions and cultural differences to enhance the South Korean culture. Working hard towards adapting new ideas and various social, political, and educational assets by effectively merging them to its own unique

aspects of the Confucian society does not mean losing the Korean identity or mentality but improving these Korean ideologies and promoting its status in the globalising world.

The major reasons ‘manager moms’ focus so much on the English language studies for their children are multifaceted; the socio-political nature of South Korean society and the success-driven cultural mentality meeting the globalising world could be seen as the nexus of this compound inquiry. By investigating the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon of South Korea, I realised that globalisation was not necessarily the core reason for learning and mastering the English language, rather globalisation has enhanced the importance of this language. Even before the concept of globalisation was widely used in South Korea, people admired those who knew English and perceived them as elites (Kim, J., 2015); in this country, promoting English language has perpetuated aristocracy and globalisation has certainly played a major role (Pennycook, 2014). Hu & McKay (2012) also claim that English competence is a “cultural and symbolic capital, the perpetuation of existing social inequality and the creation of English-knowing elitism” (p. 357) in East Asian countries. This foreign language has become a tool to conserve the power of the ruling class elites (ibid).

According to my participants, the reason why South Korean education puts emphasis on English language is to prepare its people to be true global citizens so that they can promote the nation in many ways. Participants also elaborated on why people study English so hard individually; it is to build a basic ‘spec’ (see p. 169 footnote 16) for them to succeed or at least to survive in society. Hence, focusing on English language education is a win-win strategy for both the country and individuals. Of course, participants agreed on the fact that mastering English does not guarantee success however they all agreed that it provides opportunities to be better off than those who do not have that background in English. English language proficiency is seen as the basis of the basics in South Korean society (Park, J. K., 2009; Park, S. Y., 2009; Shin, 2007); it is widely believed that mastery of ‘standard’ English language grants a better life. To make available this better life for their children,

South Korean mothers think it is necessary for their children to acquire near-native proficiency in English (Lee, 2016; Uh, et al., 2012). This is not only relevant to those who live and study in South Korea but is applicable to those South Korean children who hope to gain admissions to the top universities and/or study overseas. Educational background gained in top universities in advanced countries still is seen as the shortcut to success and English language is a must in order to study in such institutions. It might not be needed later on, but still people put their energy into studying it since English exists virtually everywhere in society making people believe it is a crucial asset one must hold (Uh, et al., 2012). The societal atmosphere creates unstable feelings that without proficiency in English language, there is a big possibility that one will be seen as inferior to others. This also means those with fluent English skills will be in an advantageous position in the national/international community. This perception has brought people to be culturally obsequious towards Western values, especially the language (ibid).

The first thing the majority of my participants said when I asked about the significance of English language were that it meant so much since it is an absolute ‘must’ in South Korea. This not only shows the status of English language in South Korea in a nutshell but it also presents how South Koreans’ lives are tied to this global language. There were four core reasons participants thought it was such an important language: first was because it is the most important subject in the college entrance examination, the second reason was it embodies globalisation, the third was because it signifies elitism and power, and the fourth reason was because studying English language has become a natural part of South Koreans’ lives. These are in line with the sociolinguistics of globalisation; the way of life has changed for South Koreans due to globalisation and the power the English language holds. The following quote precisely captures all four reasons stated above:

“I regret that I have not planned my first child to start earlier. That’s why I am pushing my second one to learn English before it’s too late. After all, everyone who plans to go to college must take the national college entrance exam and English is

the most heavily weighted subject. No one can give up on English, no one. That's how it is here. There's nothing we can do but to cope with it and make it into a habit so that unconsciously children know that this is a must to survive, better yet succeed. Besides, it's a small world, I want my children to travel and work abroad when opportunities come and for that, English should be learnt." (Seri/mother)

"Well, it all comes down to the college entrance exam. One's life is determined by the university he/she enters. So, we must put all we have for our children to pass this exam with the highest marks possible! English is a major subject and we can't avoid it ... you want to get into SKY, you better master English." (Somi/mother)

English language education and globalisation reinforce elitism in South Korean society. The market value of the university one holds a degree from, labels the person. People perceive that those holding a diploma from SKY universities (see p. 139 footnote 15) and/or internationally renowned higher institutions are elite global citizens who must have great knowledge on foreign languages as well due to their global brand name. These quotes from my participants support and validate this discussion:

"Of course I expect people from SKY to know more and speak better English, they are the smart ones! And of course, I want my child to be one of them and be looked up to and admired by others." (Minsuh/mother)

"When I see people code-switching (English to Korean, Korean to English), I admit I feel jealous. <<laughs>> They do it to show off, I think. And...well...it works! I feel that it's their way of signifying they are better than the rest, that they are the smart ones." (Jinju/mother)

"Nowadays, it's easy to go and study abroad and as a result, there're so many people who speak English well. But that does not mean they all can speak English like a native. It all comes down to how one speaks it; does he/she sound native

enough? That determines one's level here." (Haegyo/ English language teacher and mother)

"We are living in a globalised society. What can we do? Cope with it. How? Studying English is the only option." (Suji/ goose mother)

"English is the most basic language one must acquire as a global citizen. I'm sure most of the parents I've met have the same opinion as well and I think that's a big reason why parents care so much about children's English language education." (Heesun/English language teacher)

In this strong Confucian driven culture, what stands out is that a very 'American' world exists within it. South Koreans desire to learn American English and treat it as the standard (Namgoong & Lee, 2007). The majority of my participants confirmed that they demand for teachers who speak American English since they regard American English, especially the accent, as the main factor of 'doing well' (*Younguh jal handa*) in acquiring and learning the language. What does it mean to 'do well' in the South Korean context? My participants argued that it meant having an American accent, accurate pronunciation, fluency, and test-based knowledge (especially, grammatical understanding) all combined together. This comes down to the special historical relationship South Korea has had with the United States. Historically, socio-culturally, and educationally, South Korea has been pro-American and after the period of financial crisis in the late 1990s, which the South Koreans call 'the IMF period', American English has firmly become the core qualification of assessing talented human assets (Shin & Chang, 2000). The relationship with the United States and its global power have greatly influenced South Korea's English education curriculum as well:

"People tend to judge the proficiency of one's English language ability based on pronunciation and accent, especially, the American version. As English language teachers, this is tough. We teachers even attend private academies to learn the American accent." (Sora/English language teacher)

“I do heavily rely on American style English when teaching... our texts books are designed to teach American English. The power America holds in the world and how it influences our country ... play a huge role in our foreign language education. Yes, it does!” (Heesun/English language teacher)

When young, children are pressed into mastering the American accent, when in school, they must learn test-based English to earn high scores (Shim & Park, 2008). Once they start working, they again feel the strong need to study this foreign language to get promoted. Overall, they are taught to excel in every aspect of this foreign language which actually has become a second mother tongue to the South Korean population (Uh, et al., 2012). The English language has become a massive burden that stresses numerous South Koreans throughout their lives; one’s performance in English language plays a huge role in governing the people’s social stances in this stern Confucian state. This is indeed an ironic yet fascinating reality. South Koreans have not only adopted English as an important tool for communicating in the global world but they have assimilated this language as a device to administrate the social order while maintaining the Confucian doctrine as national philosophy. They have taken on the English language as a valuable asset and have tailored it into the context of South Korea to use it to gain or maintain power:

“The elite course exists...yes... living in Kangnam area is an essential point in getting into these courses and they are taught mainly in English. People believe these private courses will give you different sorts of power and of course, get you into the top universities. People view those who can afford these elite courses are intelligent and it leads to power. But isn’t it the same everywhere?” (Hani/mother)

Interview data with South Korean mothers evidently demonstrated the issue of ‘prestige varieties of language’ (Milroy, 2001; Myers-Scotton, 1993) in sociolinguistics. In this case, the particular American brand English shows how influential global power of a nation and the mother tongue of the nation are received in a particular context. The special status the

English language holds in South Korea is well explained in a nutshell by one of my participants:

“People still perceive using English as being classy. English is considered as one of the mediums to differentiate social class for sure.” (Eunhae/mother)

Mother participants were schooled from the 1980s to early 2000s; they were born and raised when South Korea was thriving economically under the governmental policy that promoted young families to have one to two children which gave parents good reasons to intensely support their children’s education. Furthermore, by experiencing the IMF period during the late 1990s (see 2.3.1), these mothers have painfully experienced the importance of English language skills which have significantly influenced their lives; even their relationship with the in-laws was affected by it:

“My mother-in-law keeps saying that I need to start teaching our son English since I’m an English language teacher. But our son is only two years old. She pressures me in saying that she was successful enough to educate her son, my husband, in sending him to a prestigious American university. She says that I need to do the same! The pressure I get from others is tremendous. But I do want to send my child to an Ivy League university after all...so I do what I do. It’s a small world and attending a world renowned university signifies you’re truly a global elite.” (Haegyo/mother)

4.7.4 Confucianism in the Global Era

Confucian doctrine on collectivistic familism dominates the South Korean society which is applied to harmonising the country (Lee, 2006). This has been confronted by intense globalisation since it is argued that globalisation has indeed changed the way of Confucian lives (Koh, 1996). I, however, do not perceive this as the Confucian ideals being weakened; I claim that globalisation has actually strengthened the basics of the Confucian way of living

in South Korea. Ironically, it has been reinforced by this tool called English language education. By heating up society through ‘English Fever’, South Koreans have used this to firmly secure their position and uplift their family name. I understand this as a version of modern Confucianisation of South Korean society through globalisation (Haboush, 1991).

This modified form of Confucianism in this globalising era is clearly seen through South Korean ‘manager moms’ who are not afraid of taking direct actions. They take on their serious role as the main planner of children’s education and expose what they are doing quietly yet loudly asking for what they need in order to be better ‘manager moms’. They do not hesitate in taking further actions by moving overseas for educational reasons and leaving their husband back home. This should not be seen as breaching the Confucian value but as another way of maintaining the family name by coping with the rapidly changing world.

The Confucian doctrine teaches South Koreans that their mind and body comes from their parents therefore they should conform to their parents’ will (Sung, 1995); this also strongly correlates to the nature of South Korean parents perceiving their children as another ‘me’. The idea of mothers saying ‘my child is another me’ makes sense in the South Korean context. No matter how foreign culture and Western ideas have influenced South Koreans, the tradition of respecting Confucian teachings has been lodged in the people and the society for decades which cannot be changed easily. The Korean mentality based on Confucian teachings, I believe, is the basis of this culture and how it functions and Confucian guidance is still needed to rationalise one’s action in this society.

A globalised form of Confucian practice is widely found in geese families. It seems like the phenomenon contradicts some classic Confucian values; mother taking the children abroad leaving the father behind sounds quite ironic in a male-dominated society (Kim, 2010). However, looking into this phenomenon carefully, it is clear that this essentially is complying with the Korean Confucian teachings; devoting selves (mothers and fathers) for the sake of the collective family name which would be continued on by the core of the

household: the children (Hwang, 1999). Complex combination of internal and external forces have influenced South Korean mothers who undoubtedly have shaped the South Korean society by re/constructing a stronger yet modern version of motherhood.

4.7.5 Positioning South Korea on the Global Stage

I find the need to discuss the position South Korea holds on the global stage since this, I believe, is one of the main drivers of the country to place such great emphasis on the English language education.

South Korea is a homogeneous monolingual society (Song, 2011); the usage of a single language with one cultural heritage has strengthened the unity of the people (Coulmas, 1999) which is strongly bound by blood ties and local relations that form the Korean nationalism. These associations stretch to educational connections which drive the dynamic of society based on deeply rooted Confucian principles. Due to the strong relation-based structure, it is easier to compare and compete; without much variety of its people and/or cultural change in society, the seemingly best way to develop the country is to promote competition (Roach & Lam, 2010). Limitless competition encouraged by the neoliberal economy and Confucian perceptions of paying back ancestors by succeeding in society, where educational achievement is heavily valued, have provoked the South Korean people to push more towards being recognised through education (Sorensen, 1994); this is how South Koreans embrace their world and how others understand this country.

In order to survive the limitless competition, they focus on the global language since it is the basic asset to acquire to arm themselves to be global citizens and at the same time, to correspond to the demand of society that is in need of competitive human assets. The satisfaction they get by their devotion towards mastering the dominant global language has produced another form of educational culture in East Asia. By educating its population to be

mobile agents in the globalising world, the South Korean government is rightly trying to place the nation in a better position on the international stage. One of the most basic tools they use is the widely used global capital, the English language. Linguistic competence, especially with a ‘prestigious’ foreign language, changes and reshapes human agencies and reforms society that generates new cultural attributes which eventually re-positions a nation (Park & Lo, 2012).

Interestingly, Okonogi (1999) asserts that strong education-based maternal affection of East Asian mothers can be seen as a newly constructed cultural asset which is a part of the national strategy of some countries to achieve global standard; it may result in accommodating particular (here, Western) culture without criticism and may witness the loss of their own cultural identity. Yet Okonogi argues that in the current situation and cultural context, it is a way of surviving and positioning people, culture, and nation within such a competitive world. My view aligns well with Okonogi on the fact that feverish attention on English language can give a better chance to enhance the development of a nation and its people in the long run and finally positioning themselves in the stage of the globalising world. The widely used global language, English, is in the middle of the emergence of new identities based on transnational strategies and the creation of new global trends; it is inevitable to promote mastering English language to produce global citizens to be effective players in the wider platform since this not only enriches the lives of people but also promotes the nation to stand out amongst others.

4.8 Theme 5: Action and Approaches Taken by ‘Manager Moms’

Vignette from one of the observations: lifelong learning of manager moms and their English discussion group

Saturday 2nd August, 2014

This meeting went on for three hours; I only observed this group meeting for an hour (11:30am – 12:30pm): I gained permission to record certain parts of the observation

Haeju (39), mom of twin daughters (11) was busy preparing and cleaning up her apartment flat since she would be hosting the mothers' English group meeting today at her place. The living room was filled with English novels and academic books; it actually did not look like a living room. The TV set was nowhere to be seen and two huge desks with different sizes of chairs around them were the only furniture. At 11:30am, three women showed up. These ladies were members of a small private mothers' group.

The members of this group consisted of mothers who earned their bachelor's and/or master's degree in the United States, Canada, and France and speak English fluently. They gather once a fortnight (Saturdays) for about two to three hours; the main objective of their gathering is to have a discussion in English. When they first started this mothers' group, they merely exchanged teaching tips and information on teaching materials and books. Haeju was the one who came up with the idea that it would be nice for the moms to brush up on their English while building up good relationship with one another. The members all agreed and that is how they started their own 'English discussion club'.

As soon as they exchanged greetings (this was in English as well), they settled down and started a light conversation (all in English, they did not use any Korean).

Seri: *"Youmi's mom said she's started her master's degree in Education, right?"*

Haeju: *"Yes... to help out Youmi. Youmi's mom is a superwoman. But I heard it was in psychology. I can't imagine myself going through university again."*

Yura: *"Ah, do you know that Junho's mom is learning English from a private tutor so she can take Junho to America next year?"*

Seri: *"Wow....well, I obviously can't afford to do that... I'm sure it's going to be too costly! <<laughs>> Oh, by the way guys, this is the book I told you about; I'm reading it these days. I think we can use it as a sub-material for our kids."*

Yura: *"Ah ha, can you go over it for us briefly?"*

Seri: *"Sure, I think this book fits into the speech that professor, er, I forgot his name... he, he gave during the seminar last week, the one on International middle schools and portfolios."*

Jihee: *"Oh, okay! Yes, that seminar was quite helpful. I'm thinking of trying to use the method he suggested on my son."*

Seri: *"I'm seriously thinking about enrolling myself into an online university. You know, there are some online universities that give practical lectures on teaching English to children so that they can speak like a native. What do you think?"*

Jihee: *"Hmmm, good idea. I mean, we rely too much on the private academies and our kids only spend about three hours per day there. I think they need more exposure. If I can be a 'home-teacher', that'd be good. Is it easy to get in?"* (speaking fluent English is not enough to be a good home-teacher is what they thought so now they are looking into furthering their education)

Seri: *"We'll check the website together after our main discussion. How's that everyone?"*

For about an hour, they held their discussion session entirely in English. The topic was on the pros and cons of the *TOEFL Junior*¹⁷ test. One of the members took out a book and shared several highlighted passages. The others took notes and discussed how they could utilize those points; this book was a TOEFL preparation book for children. During their meeting that day, they kept checking their smartphone connected to their children's 'kid's

¹⁷ TOEFL Junior is a standardised English language test for young learners provided by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). In South Korea, this test is used as a popular tool to check on children's English language proficiency.

phone’ (a phone made just for children – it directly connects the children to their parents’ cell phones and parents can constantly check the location of their children and schedule).

Later, Haeju mentioned to me that after the discussion, they had an enjoyable lunch with soft conversation and constantly code-switched the language they used while talking and finished their meeting by checking the online university’s website. (I did not get to observe this part)

Haeju mentioned her English discussion group during the interview with me; she said the members originally gathered for the sake of their children’s education but it has turned out to be truly beneficial for herself and the other mothers. They have shaped this English discussion group meeting into their study group where they could share information as well as develop their English skills at the same time. They created a new language learning environment for themselves which helped them improve as individuals.

“At the beginning, it was a bit weird. <<laughs>> We are all Koreans and we speak Korean. Speaking English and holding a discussion with other mothers was scary even though we all knew we spoke the language pretty well. But you know, this has really boosted up my life. I now feel more energised. <<laughs>> We started this meeting for the sake of our children’s education but now I’m not only getting help on that, I’m also actually learning something for myself and developing my capacity as well. We will keep doing this even after our children grow up and go away for college. This has become a very important part of my life.” (Haeju/mother)

This section discusses the action and approaches ‘manager moms’ take to achieve their aims.

4.8.1 Moms' Group

To survive the hectic life as 'manager moms', South Korean mothers flock together and form their own moms' groups (Park, et al., 2015); they say these groups are for networking, sharing information, and to keep themselves alert. They pick their own members by group filtering and implicitly assign roles; in this small yet structured world of moms, sharing, competing, and comparing are a fierce and complex matter (Kim, 2006). By being collaborative, they exercise power over other mothers and by constantly comparing and competing with one another, they feel a sense of belonging; "[people] who share common background often establish an empathic field without consciously trying. They are able to understand each other's words in the context of the other's felt experience because their experiences are similar" (Scott, 2013, p. 25). It is truly ironic that they feel relieved and secured by comparisons and competitions, however, they say it has been like this and it will continue on being like this until the tie between education and success loosen.

In a society where complex atmosphere of anxiety based on competition and sense of happiness tied to achievement coexist, mothers understand the way to persist and at the same time contribute to the family by conforming to the societal orders. According to my participants, to effectively and efficiently embrace and follow the norms of society, they come up with their own survival method: moms' groups. By constant comparisons and competitions, they finally feel they are doing something for their children and the family and they believe this brings happiness and relief; it was not just for exchanging information.

Many of the South Korean mothers take a step further and put themselves back into universities, language schools, and move abroad with their children – and some of the mothers do all these as groups (Kim, S. H., 2013). They stick to and rely on one another while still competing and comparing. Mothers enrol themselves in adult cram schools, universities, hire private tutors, and/or self-direct their studies mainly through the Internet; many of these moms' groups have their own private blogs and education websites they

constantly visit to collect information and learn something new. They do this collectively and sometimes divide up tasks amongst themselves to be more efficient (Kim, 2006). Moms' groups have been formed by mothers for a clear purpose and they strive to make the best out of the groups they are included in as members. They clearly do this for their children, however they do get something else out of it as well: companionship and reassurance. They unconsciously form their self-image and new identities through these private moms' groups and feel safe working mutually. This is supported by Shils (1996): "[t]he collective self-consciousness is the image of the civil society concurrently experienced by most of the members of the society" (p. 41). Moms' groups are great examples of forming mutual 'self-consciousness' that so many mothers experience every day in South Korea. The collective identities of mothers are intensified through these moms' groups.

Mothers try to be managers for their children's education and at the same time they want to be their teachers and mentors as well; this is indeed challenging. Moms' groups offer these mothers to learn from one another and adapt what other mothers are doing. This greatly aids these mothers to take on the roles of manager, teacher, and mentor (Park, et al., 2015; Jeon, 2011). *'Education starts from home and by educating self and children, one will uplift the family name and by doing so, will harmonise the society that leads to building up a better nation (□□□□□□□□)';* to fulfil this creed that is respected by the whole population, mothers pull their energy together. This passionate energy has created what we know as moms' groups in South Korea. These privately formed moms' groups satisfy mothers' needs that society does not provide and the outcome produced by these private groups influences the education of the nation and the society. The majority of my mother participants said they formed their own moms' groups to effectively carry out their responsibilities as South Korean mothers. Jeon (2011) highlights three major roles of 'manager moms' which he termed the 3M model: mentor, model and motivator. Through their own moms' group, mothers check, advise, and help out one another by becoming each

other's mentor, model, and motivator. By being involved in moms' groups they find it easier to carry out these multi-roles.

Mothers and children tied in their own groups, act together; they not only attend the same cram schools, academies, and hire the same private tutors but they also often spend vacation together. Children move and act like a single organism under their mothers' guidance. Both mothers and children create their own worlds within these groups and design their plans according to the mothers who hold the most power; the logic of this system is surprisingly similar to that of the neoliberal construction. It is run by the leader, 'pig mom', who systematically organises and structures the group and at the same time, they open up information only amongst themselves; the nature of these moms' groups are quite cliquish (Kim, S. H., 2013; Lee, 2011).

Some of my participants mentioned that their social skills have been put to test several times; they said that these private connections with other mothers were one of the most difficult dealings they had to go through. The purpose of their gatherings was clear and if one could not bring anything to the table, she would feel useless and fear that it must somehow influence her child. These relationships between mothers, they say, are strategic; since they meet and gather within the condition of competitive educational settings, their interactions are largely based upon comparisons and inquiries which sometimes drive the relationship in negative directions (Park, et al., 2015; Kim, S. H., 2013). This evidently depicts a segment of neoliberal society where competition has driven parents to do anything for the success of their children; even relationship amongst mothers are formed based on children's academic achievements. The sense of superiority many mothers have over others who do not put as much time and energy into their children's education, affects their identities since that feeling of achievement fills in the emptiness they have after leaving their career. In South Korea, being academically successful means tremendous support by his/her parents backed up by their tight 'management' and in the process of getting the child to the top of his/her

class, countless negotiations and coaxing amongst parents, children, other mothers, friends, and teachers are unavoidable (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2011).

The emergence of these small and exclusive moms' groups has influenced South Korean mothers to take it one step further; in order to contribute to their children's education and the moms' groups they belong to, numerous mothers are now dedicating themselves into a unique version of lifelong learning.

4.8.1.1 Emotional Bonding and Rivalries

Most of the mother participants were members of certain mothers' groups; they were actively engaged in the cliques they belonged to and had different attitudes towards their groups and the members. They all agreed that they got valuable information from the group meetings and had stayed up to date with star tutors, study abroad programmes, connections for advice, study methods, and new study materials. They also approved of the fact that these group meetings enhanced not only their own network but also their children's personal connections. They usually met during the day time right after sending their children to school/academies; they discussed on a variety of topics, however, the most sought after subjects of their heated talks were on English, mathematics, foreign language middle/high schools, and overseas study.

By sharing not only educational information but their emotions and perceptions, these moms become attached to one another and they feel a strong sense of belonging. This bonding, however, is a double-edged sword; it brings them satisfaction and relief by assuring themselves that they are not alone in doing a tough job managing their children's education but at the same time, it stresses them out due to constant comparison, peer pressure, and jealousy. This balanced tension amongst mothers within these mothers' groups in fact is the key to holding these mothers tight and this is what makes these groups so unique. My participants' view on moms' group validate what I discussed so far:

“All moms are into managing their children’s education by being engaged in some sort of moms’ cliques, well, all the moms I know at least are. So, I feel pressured into joining one. If I don’t, then I’m afraid my child might miss out on something and other moms will not treat me as one of them...they’ll see me as an outsider.”

(Seolhyun/mother)

“It is up to parents to broaden children’s network and the effective way of doing this is to join a group run by mothers. They have their own standards in accepting new members. It’s not easy. This is how it has been and how it still works.”

(Yunhee/mother)

“I somehow feel secure that I’m not alone in this journey and I get support from the other moms in my group... it helps me. I feel like I’m doing the right thing and going the right direction. Yes, it’s (mothers’ group) helpful.” (Hani/mother)

“Jealousy? <<laughs>> Yes, we are human beings. Of course we are jealous of those who stand out from the group, be it a mom or a child! But I think it is a healthy kind of jealousy... it motivates me though some might not agree with me.”

(Yunhee/mother)

The purpose and the disposition of these groups are very similar though there are regional differences. Famous academies, cram schools, private tutoring, teachers/tutors, and study materials are the main themes they pay attention to. However, the underlying purpose of these meetings is to form a lifelong network, which is considered as the most influential power one holds in the South Korean society. South Korea is a country where personal connections are seen as one of the most valuable assets in a person’s life. Therefore, it is not surprising to see these active mothers pouring all their energy into joining these mothers’ groups to form personal connections.

While many mothers try hard to join these mothers’ groups, working mothers feel left out. They do not have time to attend the meetings and do not have information to share with the

stay-home manager mothers. Beck-Gernsheim (2014) argues that this negative feeling held by working mothers often leads to self-abasement, helplessness, isolation, and anger. The emotional status of these working mothers could be explained as hitting rock bottom. In line with Beck-Gernsheim, many of my working mom participants felt left out and felt sorry towards their children. Of course, there were mothers who were confident and proud of themselves for having a career. However, the consensus of the majority of ‘manager moms’ I interviewed was that they never regretted giving up their career for the sake of their children’s education. Both working moms and stay-home moms all agreed that a certain amount of sacrifice is necessary in bringing up their children and most of them said they had no choice but to give up their career:

“It is true that there’s no working mom in our group. We do not intentionally push them away but they literally do not have time to come to our meetings.”

(Yejin/mother)

“I always feel sorry for my child and have this guilty conscience... but I don’t have a choice. I keep thinking, maybe later, maybe in the near future, I can quit my job and devote myself to my child. I feel so bad... that my child is missing something because I’m working.” (Minsuh/mother)

“We can’t do all the things those Kangnam ‘manager moms’ are doing for their kids. But there certainly are things that we can learn and try to adapt from their practice. We won’t be competing against them, but we do compete within our circle.”

(Jinju/mother from a satellite city)

“I know I shouldn’t generalise but to tell the truth, most of us teachers feel that working moms’ children and stay-home manager moms’ children differ from the basics in many ways. I can tell whose mothers are stay-home moms by looking at children’s overall accomplishment in homework and understanding of lectures.”

(Haegyo/English language teacher and mother)

“Elementary (primary) school grades determine which university one will enter, this is the reality. Elementary grades by and large, affect people’s lives. So, I understand those mothers who give up their career.” (Sora/English language teacher)

South Korean moms are fit to be called ‘manager moms’ in their own way. They all plan for the best and aid their children with full support as far as they can manage financially, physically and emotionally.

4.8.2 Voluntary Learning: Lifelong Learning of ‘Manager Moms’

I noted many of my mother participants were putting themselves through a unique form of lifelong learning; a truncated version of self-directed learning (see 2.5.2) was popular amongst mothers in re-learning the English language. Truncated lifelong learning sounds ironic however, the learning pattern of South Korean ‘manager moms’ supports this unique version of lifelong learning.

The main purpose of this short-term lifelong learning of manager moms was, of course, to assist their children’s education. However, I felt like there was more to this; they were saying they did it purely for their children yet there existed other motives which were quite unconsciously mentioned. By talking to my participants and listening to their stories, I construed their behaviours to be aiming towards their own learning trajectories as well. They were constantly trying to understand and find themselves through dynamically engaging themselves in different learning activities, which aspired them to committing time and energy for the sake of their own growth whilst living as mothers.

South Korean mothers enthusiastically engage in learning activities (Park, et al., 2015); not only do they re/learn certain subjects by themselves or as groups but they also take classes on how to manage study plans, how to come up with effective teaching and learning methods, and how to be strategic teachers by enrolling themselves in online universities,

part-time/full-time postgraduate courses, attending language academies, hiring tutors, and/or going to community centres where free classes are offered (Shin, 2015; Uh, et al, 2012). The moms' groups they form themselves are good sources to get high quality information and study materials whilst at the same time, the group environment provides them with opportunities to study together. They utilise all network and information they have in order to learn something useful for the next step their children need to take and through this process, they un/consciously learn something new for their own individual growth. My participants did not see all these action taken by themselves as a part of lifelong learning; as a matter of fact, they thought this was just a part of raising and educating their children. However, they did feel like they have matured and developed through the process. Lave & Wenger's (1991) 'Situated Learning Theory' (see 2.5.1) strongly supports South Korean mothers' lifelong learning; the concept of situated learning explains that learning takes place according to social conditions and positions one belongs to. 'Manager moms' are driven by the socio-cultural anticipation and educational responsibility to re/learn various subjects for their children, collective family, and society. They are positioned as the persons in charge which naturally urge them to learn.

Mothers' desire to learn more and contribute to family, strong work ethic, sense of collective belonging in association with other mothers, and the aspiration for accomplishment all add up to finding 'I', the self. By positioning themselves in society as mothers, they understand themselves and continuously reshape their identities. In a society where women are not as visible as men, this is an effective way to validate their presence as important figures; they show their self-esteem and authority by gaining the 'mother power' (Cho, 1998; Burck & Speed, 1995). This gives strength to why lifelong learning, however short it may be, could be deemed as a life changing learning opportunity to this particular group of South Korean mothers.

After all, this is another way of projecting self to others, consoling themselves for trying their best, and searching for the 'I' they may have forgotten to look after. They feel satisfied

while learning for their children and themselves; some of my participants said it gave them a reason to live every day to the fullest, that they are not only maturing as mothers but they are developing themselves to be better persons. Though their self-directed learning that they are involved in right now may not be long-term, this short period of effective learning could be beneficial to both the mothers and society. Thus, this energy and enthusiasm these mothers have should not be overlooked.

Though mothers commit to a unique approach of lifelong learning fit for their condition, it is not actively fostered by communities yet. Mentors and teachers are needed to encourage lifelong learning particularly for these mothers since they greatly influence children's educational journey (Kim, S. H., 2013; 2006). Mothers, who are in the vanguard of forming educational phenomena, have the right to receive support and further education when needed since the education these mothers gain would play a major role in educating children. Therefore, society as a whole should support these mothers' lifelong learning.

The value English language education holds within the lifelong learning field should be regarded as a significant area to focus on; the importance of this foreign language for adult learners should be re-illuminated. In 2013, 6.3 trillion won (roughly 50 billion US dollars) were spent in private English language education in South Korea (KEDI, 2014). It is evident that learning English language means a lot to South Korean people; it is a crucial language to study not only for young students but clearly for adults, including parents. South Korean mothers, whether intentional or not, greatly influence the English language education and situate themselves in the midst of the lifelong learning context by actively participating in re/learning this global language.

How far do these 'manager moms' go to manage their children's education? They quit their jobs and give up on their own career to pursue a different but more important business of managing their children's education (Cho, 2005). Hence it is not surprising that these ladies push themselves and devote most of their time on developing themselves as capable

‘manager moms’. I noticed my participants taking notes, reading and constantly checking and amending their schedules to fit more learning activities and meetings in even during their short spare time. I noted six different types of voluntary learning my participants were engaged in and most of them were taking part in not only one type but a mixture of several forms:

- 1) They study and learn English to aid their children through attending private adult academies/cram schools, private tutorials, online schools, and/or trying to create their own study content (Lifelong Learning).

“I attend English language academy twice a week and constantly check this website, a blog run by ‘power moms’ because they upload and share lots of know-hows and materials. It is not easy but this is my job.” (Jihee/mother)

“I learn a lot from other mothers and I try to draw the best things from what I learn then I come up with my own study material for my child. It’s a challenge for me but I’m happy my child is enjoying it and her English has improved. <<laughs>>”
(Gayun/mother)

Many of my participants have their own way of teaching and helping out their children with English. This form of ‘mother-brand English’¹⁸ has become famous amongst ‘manager moms’ and they use their special and unique methods and materials to enhance children’s learning (Uh, et al., 2012; Yoo & Lee, 2006). However, when children become older (usually upper grades in elementary school) ‘mom-brand English’ teaching lessens and mothers start relying on expert tutors in academies or cram schools. They realise that they do not hold the expertise in advanced level English language teaching but are content that at least they have formed a good study habit for their children while they were teaching. Many

¹⁸ Mother-Brand English or Home-brand English is a term used to explain the methods mothers use to assist children to experience linguistic and cultural diversity at home. Mothers nowadays have increased capacity for enhancing and understanding the English language teaching at home through various sources such as multimedia and online teaching materials (Yoo & Lee, 2006).

of them hand over teaching to expert teachers and tutors but still closely monitor the process and progress and plan the next step.

All mother participants agreed that when young, learning and acquiring the English language through fun ‘mother-brand English’ via play and various activities, especially through newspapers, do help children build self-confidence:

“Newspapers provide so much good advice. There is always at least umm, two, three pages of great columns and easy methods moms can adopt and use. They also inform you on where to take your children and sorts of activities that supplement the indoor learning. That’s why I subscribe to four different newspapers.”

(Seolhyun/mother)

“I collect all the articles related to education. Utilising newspapers is a great idea. I get most of the information on seminars and educational club activities from it. Of course, I can’t try everything that’s introduced in the newspaper but it does give me ideas.” (Naeun/mother)

“I use play to enrich my daughter’s English. She’s quite artistic and loves drawing pictures and singing songs. She’s into musicals these days so I try my best to take her to English musicals. I enjoy it, too, you know. <<laughs>> When we come home, we will talk about the most interesting part from the musical and act that scene out in English. I guide her to listen to English songs all the time and she really enjoys it. This is how I think my daughter’s English has improved greatly.”

(Gayun/mother)

“My children and I make study materials together. We come up with a topic and decide who will be the teacher for that particular week. They love playing teacher and they immerse themselves into researching and coming up with presentations

or... even writing short stories in English. Yes, all this is done in English.”

(Jiyoun/mother)

- 2) They attend private mother group meetings, seminars, workshops, and information sessions provided by various educators and institutions:

“I think I attend seminars and workshops almost every week. There are lots of free lectures we can attend but of course, we need to be fast and efficient to book a place. It’s good and reassuring to listen to experts’ advices and ask questions. I feel like I’m doing something valuable for my children.” (Seri/mother)

“I fully engage myself with an attitude to learn when handling my children’s education. This is the same in moms’ group meetings; I learn a lot from other mothers and I try my best to provide them with something new, too. And in order to do that, I must study.” (Hani/mother)

“I was really stunned... when I saw this one mom talking to the native teacher in English. I thought she’d get more information from the teacher since she can communicate well with the natives and this would help her child out a lot. That really hit me hard and that’s when I started studying English again.”
(Eunhae/mother)

- 3) They take their children abroad (English speaking countries such as the United States and Canada) in hope for their children to master the English language (and to support their children abroad, they re-learn English):

“I did attend English language courses before coming to Canada and I am still attending courses given at the community college here. I knew I had to somehow re-learn the language so that I can live in Canada with my child.” (Suji/goose mother)

By deciding to move to English speaking countries, these mothers even enrol themselves in colleges and language courses. This again illustrates, I believe, a form of lifelong learning.

- 4) They obtain counselling certificates to understand and help out their children. There are plenty of private institutions mothers are encouraged to attend in order to gain the state approved certificate for education counsellors:

“First, I just attended a workshop and the person who led the workshop was a mother, just like myself. I thought, if she could be an expert, why can’t I? <<laughs>> It will not only help my children out but could be a good opportunity for me as well. So, I studied hard and got the certificate.” (Seri/mother)

- 5) They get additional degrees in education or psychology (postgraduate studies):

“After I quit my job, I felt lost and I was a bit depressed. Managing my child’s education was not as easy as I thought it’d be. I struggled for a while and thought, if this is what I’m going to do for a long time, I want to be an expert in this area. I enrolled myself as a part time post graduate student in education. I hope this will pay off. At least, I’m enjoying it.” (Seolhyun/mother)

“I thought it was natural as a mom to develop myself by studying more for my children. I still think this is true. This eventually led to a new career for me.” (Haeju/mother)

- 6) They put in endless time sitting next to their children and guide them in reviewing and previewing important subjects (and to do this, they study their children’s textbooks in advance):

“Whenever I have time, I skim my children’s English textbooks and do additional reading. I want to stay up to date on what they are learning because they ask

questions when doing homework and I want to help them as much as possible. I usually sit right next to them, with my own book, but to tell the truth, I can't really concentrate on my book, I just keep glancing over and see what my children are doing. I guess... they may feel a bit uneasy every now and then, but I feel like I need to stay beside them. They are nine and ten year olds, so they still need me. But when they go to middle school, I guess I won't be sitting with them all the time."

(Mira/mother)

By taking care of their children's education, South Korean mothers actually put themselves through lifelong learning intentionally and/or unintentionally. This type of lifelong learning is somewhat different compared to the generally known lifelong learning; this voluntary adult learning done by 'manager moms' is truncated; it is usually short-lived. This type of adult education carried out by mothers normally ends when children enter university, the destination they have been running towards. These different types of lifelong learning of 'manager moms' were easily witnessed amongst my participants.

Mothers try hard. They are exhausted and in order to revitalize their tired lives, they try to learn something for themselves. But they cannot deny the fact that the new things they try to learn/acquire are all somehow related to their children's education. They realise that they cannot free themselves from the fetters of being 'manager moms'. That is why they directly encounter this matter knowing they cannot escape from it as moms living in South Korea.

"If I can't escape from it, I will dive into it. There is no way I'm going to avoid it.

It's about my son's life and my life!" (Jihee/mother)

South Korean 'manager moms' direct themselves into voluntary learning; the underlying reason for doing this is to aid their children however, in a way, it is actually helping out these mothers to self-develop and furthermore, in some cases, lead them to a new career. It is clear that these moms could be classified as active lifelong learners. This developed theme regarding lifelong learning of mothers relates to the literature discussed on self-directed

adult education (see 2.5). Finally, they all voiced up and said they needed attention and help from various institutions and communities on providing them with educational information, study materials and classes/workshops so that they could learn systematically and apply it to their children and to themselves. According to some of my participants, they started off devoting time in learning because of their children but now they do it for themselves:

“I thought I did my best for my child but then when I saw the grade he was getting I got really frustrated and upset. I thought we were in big trouble – me and my child, I mean. I saw no breakthrough and emptied my mind. That’s when I started studying for myself, for the sake of my being.” (Yunkyung/mother)

The final question asked to all my mother participants was: What do you think will be left after you are done with ‘managing’ your children’s education? They said they were so engrossed in being ‘manager moms’ that they had not thought about their lives after the ‘managing’ is done. It is time for them to plan their lives and time for the community to help them dream of what they can do with the know-hows and data they have already armed themselves with. All the energy, resources, and symbiotic relations they have accumulated are valuable societal assets that could benefit the nation. Lifelong learning should give a vision to society to effectively and efficiently utilise these assets.

I bring Hani’s (mother participant) quote to sum up how many South Korean ‘manager moms’ perceive their short-term lifelong learning:

“Everyone is born with possibilities; but parents are the ones who can help flourish those possibilities through giving children educational opportunities. It’s the responsibility of the parents. I take this duty seriously and I will go extra miles to achieve what we have set as a family goal. Re/learning subjects such as English is an inevitable process I must take... it is frustrating but at the same time exciting. I feel like I’m learning new things. If I did not have my children, I wouldn’t have had a

chance to re/learn all this. This is a completely different experience and I learn things differently. I, too, have grown as a person.” (Hani/mother)

4.8.3 Educational Conduct of Geese Mothers

Lives of South Korean ‘manager mothers’ living abroad were no different; actually, they were pushing themselves and their children even harder. This was clearly demonstrated in my phone and email interviews with participants overseas. When planning their children’s education, South Korean mothers living in the USA, Canada, and Singapore took it into account that they would someday go back to South Korea, therefore, they did not hesitate to carry on teaching their children subjects they would be learning in South Korea. The children went to the local schools and learned the curriculum provided in English with the native students. The strict study schedule came after school. These passionate ‘manager moms’ flew Korean text books and materials from Seoul over to where they were; they said they studied the texts themselves and stayed updated with the South Korean education system in order to feed them to their children. Some mothers went further by hiring Korean teachers living there to teach their children the South Korean set of courses. Mothers’ groups were not an exception; South Korean mothers living abroad also formed their own cliques and groups to keep up with educational news from South Korea and helped one another out with what was going on in the local schools as well as share information. They also learned the English language from community centres while the children were at schools. During the summer and winter vacations, they took their children back to South Korea to enrol them into special private academies and cram schools. My participant, Suji, who lives as a goose mother in Canada, elaborated her frustration:

“I feel like we are missing out somehow. All we can get from this place is mastering English. When we go back to South Korea, we must again adjust to the life there.

<<pauses>> *That's why yes, I am concentrating on my daughter's English language here but I am still trying to get my daughter to stay current with the studies she should be doing if she were to be in South Korea now.*" (Suji/goose mother)

These 'manager moms' living abroad took a step further and made a truly important decision to leave their husbands behind in South Korea and bravely take their children to a foreign country just for the sake of the children's education. The significance of English language in South Korea has shaped Confucian familism to be modified in a way to accommodate the current trend of the English language education (Kim, J., 2010; Lee & Koo, 2006). This has become another social phenomenon; families living apart due to educational needs are commonly seen in South Korean society nowadays:

"I know how hard it must be for my husband to live alone in Korea. But we have agreed to live as a goose family until our children are old enough to stay here in America by themselves. Both my husband and I do not regret making this decision because we are doing our best to give our children better opportunities."
(Yoona/goose mother)

Overseas 'manager moms' were coping with other issues as well. They were going through the same intense lives as those living in South Korea and added to that, they were put into an environment they were not familiar with (Lee, H., 2010). They were also playing both roles as mothers and fathers for their children and at the same time they constantly felt sorry for their husbands living in South Korea. They also mentioned that though they were doing all this for their children and family, they still felt their in-laws were not in favour of seeing the family living apart though they agreed. This exemplifies clashes and negotiation between Confucian values practiced in South Korean society heavily influenced by globalisation.

4.8.4 New Enculturation and Empowerment of Mothers

I see this ‘manager mom’ phenomenon as South Korean mothers acclimatizing themselves in society through enculturation; enculturation means the process of internalising the culture of the society one was born and has been living in. It is a learning process in which one acquires a certain culture and its meanings through formal and/or informal daily activities shared by members of the society (Kottak, 2011). Whilst receiving equal opportunity to pursue further education, women are still taught to be graceful and gently support the family in South Korea. This social irrationality has driven educated women to create their own culture as mothers (Hays, 1998); they have enculturated their way of managing children’s education and have strongly engraved the unique maternal management into South Korean society. By this movement, ‘mother power’ has derived which is an “unintended product of Confucian patriarchy” (Cho, 1998, p. 203). Ironically, this ‘mother power’ significantly contributes “to the continuation of an extremely conservative social system” (ibid) since mothers use this power to tighten and enhance the family lineage. The social atmosphere of longing for power and maintaining it through lineage and the global influence on the importance of the English language have, after all, shaped a new type of maternal form called ‘manager moms’ and have led these mothers to enculturate their own actions justified by socially constructed notion of maternal affection (Beck-Gernsheim, 2014; Sikes, 1997; Chesler, 1990).

Why is it that numerous ‘manager moms’ left their careers and employed themselves as educational managers for their children? It was found that the complex national and global settings and socio-cultural beliefs have pressed these mothers to become hyper competitive. They try to embrace all these elements and force those onto themselves. Why? For the sake of their children’s future, they said. In addition, it ascertains that they have done their best and have lived to the fullest as moms. It is important to note that they have constantly put emphasis on ‘being a mom’ rather than talking about themselves as individuals. Living as a

mom, especially a 'successful' one, shapes her identity as a competent person which is an effective way to leave her footprints in the society (Lee, 2011). Reflecting back on their journeys as 'manager moms' so far, all my mother participants said that their self-regard towards themselves had increased due to the fact that they tried their best in providing the best education possible for their children within their parameters, or 'leagues' as they put it. For them, being a mom is being themselves; in the same vein, being a 'successful' mom is being a 'successful' self. Hence when I asked if they could reflect back on themselves as women, as individuals, they still included their children in their stories.

Empowerment of South Korean 'manager moms' in education has given a unique power to women in this male chauvinistic society. This has also led parents and educators to look back and self-examine their demeanour. The power they hold as mothers assist them to critically evaluate vast aspects of education in this country as well as hold them together to have their voice heard:

"You know, when it comes to our child's education, my husband fully trusts me. I hold the authority, not him. He never questions me because he knows more than well that I devote myself into this business seriously." (Taeyeon/mother)

"Hoping my children are not left out, hoping my children belong to the leading faction in society and be positive additions to the country and the world so that they can dream bigger has led me to be a competitive 'manager mom'. I don't regret it. <<laughs>> I want my sons to lead a life that I can only dream of, you know... the life I really wanted to have. I consider my sons as my alter ego... like, they ARE the other 'me'. So, through my children, I speak and show myself. This actually gives me strength and power." (Seri/mother)

"I thought I lost my identity when I had my son. People started calling me Joon's mom instead of my own name. Now I'm used to it and actually quite like being called Joon's mom. <<laughs>> I feel proud of being called 'Joon's mom' and I find

myself from my child. It is not hard to understand why Korean moms invest their lives in their children. All mothers of Korea will have the same opinion on this, I'm sure. I believe they feel the same way I feel. Ummm, this feeling is shared only amongst moms... those without kids will not understand. It's just so hard to describe but it's definitely here." (Mira/mother)

It may seem like these mothers are obsessing over their children and their education, however, this is their normal daily conduct which is firmly embedded in the cultural circumstance of South Korea.

The voice of mothers over their children and the way they look at their children have massive power; what they think, say and act upon influence the lives of their children and that authority shapes mothers' identities as parents, daughters, wives, friends, and individuals. Furthermore, the power they hold as mothers give them the opportunity to critically evaluate themselves and facilitate the process and progress as 'managers' of their children.

4.9 South Korean Society, English Language, and Globalisation

I utilise a part of the Sociolinguistics of Globalisation concept to explain and validate my claims on the micro, meso, and macro forces that drive the emergence of South Korean 'manager moms' who are engrossed in learning, teaching, and managing English language. It is no doubt that this international language has become a huge part of South Koreans lives; the English language is one of the most important resources to build up repertoire of knowledge in the South Korean context (Park & Lo, 2012). What this global language means to South Korean people and how it influences a dynamic monolingual society must be discussed in order to deeply understand the actions taken by 'manager moms'. Moreover,

concepts from the Sociolinguistics of Globalisation provide explanations to how the status of a language is determined and changed in a globalising world.

The wave of intense globalisation and the neoliberal capitalist system have caused the Confucian country to change the nature of the traditional South Korean family structure (Lee & Koo, 2006); the mobility of family members is believed to be worth the risk for the sake of education. This huge change in lifestyle “reflects and intensifies anxieties about the shifting relationship between language, class, and national identity” (Park & Lo, 2012, p. 149). Geese families have emerged to fulfil the demand of mastering the English language (Kim, J., 2010; Kang, 2009; Lee & Koo, 2006) and ‘manager moms’ have taken up a special place in the South Korean society as one of the most important figures in education; these social changes driven by a complex combination of unique cultural mind-set and foreign ideologies have shaped South Korean society where old Confucian values are being adjusted in order to adapt and accommodate to the globalising world.

Pennycook (2007), Blommaert (2003), and Coupland (2003) claim that society is understood through appreciating the language(s) used and local phenomena can easily be transferred to other societies through shared languages; in the case of South Korea, through the English language people not only see and understand the world but realise where they stand in the global community; they comprehend their lives as students, office workers, and mothers not only in the context of South Korea. The perceptions they hold on various issues change significantly due to this certain language. The phenomenon of South Korean ‘manager moms’ preoccupied with children’s English language education is a local occurrence yet similar cases are witnessed in other East Asian countries such as China, Japan, and Singapore.

Another important aspect of the English language that has significantly influenced the South Korean society is its strong relationship towards class mobility (Seth, 2002). Keen South Korean mothers do not hesitate to devote themselves to re-learning and teaching this language to their children as soon as possible so that they can secure their social position

and/or move up the social ladder which leads to academic imperialism (Park & Abelman, 2004). Academic imperialism within a culture where people strive for better status drives society to embrace things to differentiate selves from others, for example a foreign language. This encourages social mobility where a certain language is deeply involved in being the main instrument (Wright, 2003; Heller, 1995). I see this as a social issue related to the values of a certain society; the concept of society and language should be discussed together to understand the culture, people, relations, and power. The Sociolinguistics of Globalisation moulds all these fragments and puts them in a broader context and a wider debate.

The impact a language has in a society is indisputable since it is one of the main elements in constituting a harmonious society. As Pennycook (2014) puts it, promoting a language encourages people to deeply understand “particular forms of culture and knowledge” (p. 152). A language is at the heart of a culture moulding and changing people’s thoughts and lives; a foreign language brings a different perspective and meaning to a society which, in a global age, is vital in shaping a dynamic environment (Coupland, 2013). South Korean mothers are spearheading in shaping the country to effectively fit into the rapidly changing diverse and vibrant world.

4.10 Applied Pattern Model of South Korean ‘Manager Moms’

This section discusses the *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms* (see p. 217 Figure 4.2) which I conceptualised from the findings that examined the phenomenon of ‘manager moms’ at different levels of intensity to answer the research questions. Various themes were developed and a systematic way of organising these findings was needed. This model is backed up by relevant literature and conceptions behind the phenomenon and takes it further to discuss the theory derived which is discussed later in this chapter.

The *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms* was developed to support the theory resulting from analysed data. As Long (2007) asserts, “[t]heories bring order out of chaos” and “indicate what is important, offering road maps for research programs” (p. 22). I wanted a clear and simplified representation “to explain why specific events and patterns of events occur as they do” (Wellington, 2015, p. 37) to support my theory. I took Wellington’s advice and used this model “to understand events and to see them in a new or different way” (ibid, p. 38).

The model starts off with illustrating what has brought the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon into South Korean society (driving forces). Then it moves on to depict the coexistence of globalisation (macro forces) which has fuelled the phenomenon and societal pressure that stems from Confucianism (meso forces); peer pressure (micro forces) on education and the importance of the English language, and their crave for success which is tied to the Korean Confucian philosophy of familism are represented. Finally, the model shows how these forces are intertwined with a suitably modified form of motherhood and how mothers take actions to cope with all these rapid changes in society to raise academically thriving children (action and approaches). The model also discusses the newly derived power of ‘manager moms’ and how they use it to position themselves in society, a society that is interwoven with globalisation enriched by English language or vice versa, Confucian oriented education which is culturally driven by comparison and fierce competition.

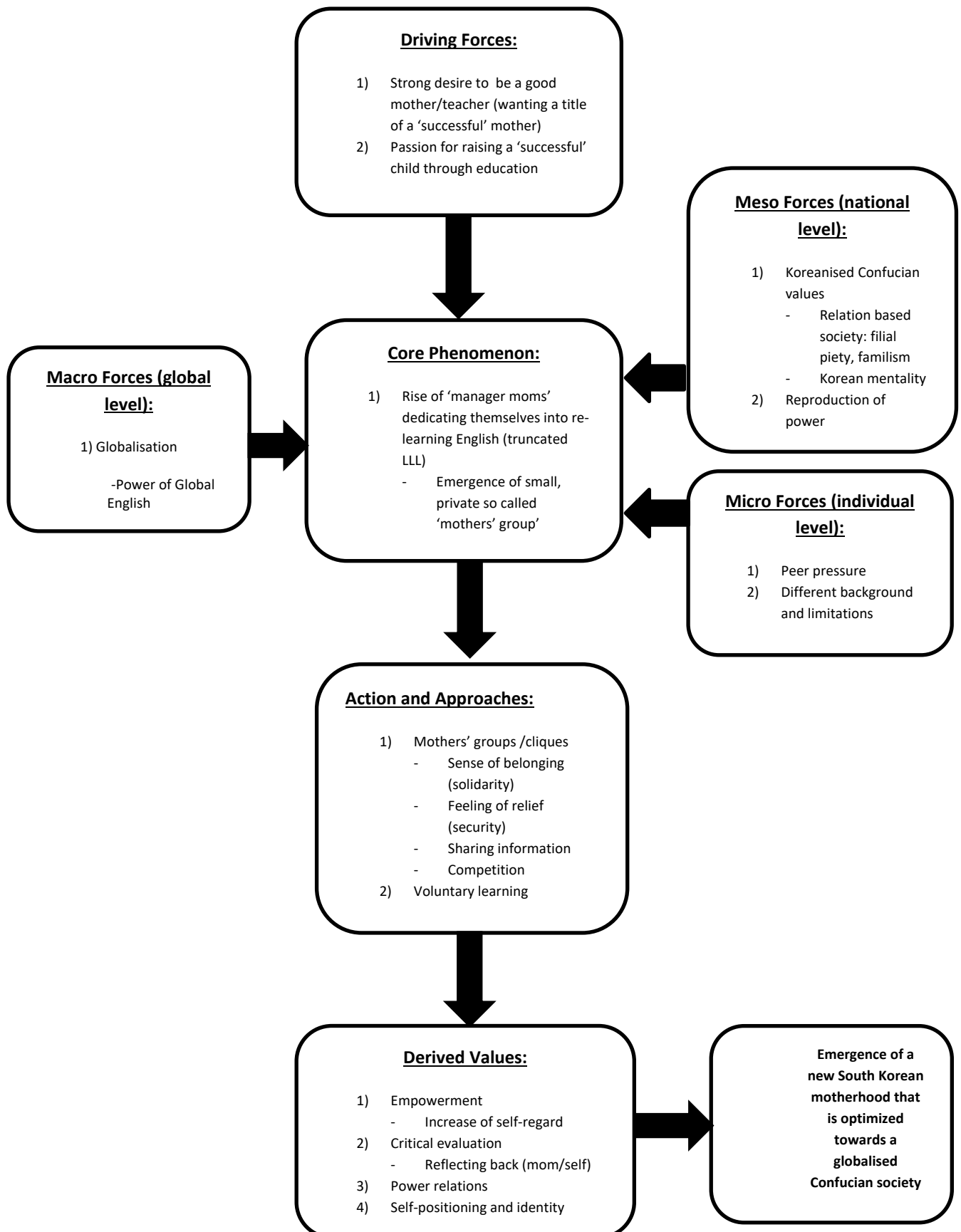
The model portrays how the themes are connected and how I understand South Korean ‘manager moms’ through collected data. The core phenomenon being scrutinised is shaped by different forces; I start with the *Driving forces* which describes the main cause of such a phenomenon to rise. This causal condition can also be seen in the ‘tiger mom’ phenomenon. The driving forces are supported by other forces that influence the occurrence and I have categorised these conditions into *Macro*, *Meso*, and *Micro* forces. These forces act as stimuli which guide the actors, the mothers, to take action. By undertaking these deeds, they believe they grow as mothers and cultivate their own know-hows which add value to their family

and furthermore, the nation. This model tries to capture and explain the pattern South Korean mothers generally experience as ‘manager moms’. I acknowledge that this model cannot/does not generalise all South Korean mothers, however, I believe this could be of assistance in understanding what drives these women and how they manage this huge responsibility consigned to their care.

I have drawn upon Amy Chua’s concept of ‘Tiger Mother’, a widely known phenomenon, to clearly illustrate and authenticate my own notion of ‘South Korean Manager Moms’. It also, I believe, was a suitable choice due to both ‘Tiger Mother’ and ‘South Korean Manager Mom’ being East-Asian. Of course, it cannot be denied that Chua, who brought up the notion of ‘Tiger Mother’, is a Chinese-American whose values and ideas are westernised due to her circumstances. Although the derivation of both ‘Tiger moms’ and ‘manager moms’ relate to Confucian principles, I believe and the data show that South Korean ‘manager moms’ differ from the Westernised version of East-Asian motherhood; a different methods of approach towards children’s education in different contexts cannot be evaluated correspondingly. However, Chua was born into a strict East-Asian family and she, though different from South Korean ‘manager moms’, undoubtedly retains those unique East Asian values in educating her children. In this sense, I therefore thought bringing in a part of Chua’s conception of strict motherhood based on East Asian Confucian values would add positively to the ‘South Korean Manager Mom’ model.

By bringing in the core concepts of Korean Confucianism, importance of English language education reinforced by globalisation, and the lifelong learning approach mothers take, the model was conceptualised which explains the forces that shape the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon.

Figure 4.2 Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms



4.11 Derived Values from the Model

Going through the process of becoming South Korean ‘manager moms’, these women gain invaluable strength, benefit, and quality skills from it. The empowerment of mothers in a Confucian society increases their egoism as mothers and as individuals. It gives a chance for them to critically evaluate themselves and reflect back. Mothers holding certain power in a male-dominated society has tightened and strengthened the Confucianisation of South Korean society (Cho, 1998); this means mothers could be seen as pillars to safeguarding the Confucian principles. By ardently managing children’s education, they experience the socially constructed meaning of motherhood that is only authentic to South Korea; while conforming to the Confucian teachings in educating their children, they often go against the tradition by becoming geese families and leaving the father, the central figure of a family, behind (Kim, J, 2010). The unique power the mother holds in this case positions her at a special level within the household and society. It re/shapes their identity as South Korean mothers, wives, in-laws, sisters, and friends which supports them in creating new power relations amongst family members and the others.

The energy and knowledge these mothers create within society should be regarded as valuable cultural capital. Mothers are armed with information, know-hows, and creative educational attributes; they hold massive ability to perform productively and produce value.

The identities of these women are influenced and formed by the complex mixture of social, cultural, and moral circumstances of South Korea and the reflexive account these mothers give out on their journeys as ‘manager moms’ bring about a different conception to lifelong learning. The notion of lifelong learning takes on a new position by giving these mothers a chance to empower and evaluate themselves as mothers and as individuals.

4.11.1 Mothers' Self-positioning in Society

Through devoting herself to her children, she finds her identity; she finds herself as a mother rather than identifying herself as an individual. She finds herself belonging to this group of mothers through "collective self-consciousness" (Tu, 1996, p. 39). They believe they share philosophies, ideas and attitudes that unify them as 'South Korean mothers' and through this, they identify themselves as crucial members of family and society. This is in line with Charmaz's (2006) conception that people "delineate social contexts in which they attempted to negotiate and establish their preferred and potential identities, suggest how different identity levels presuppose different selves" (p. 124).

South Koreans live in a society where mothers' depression related to children's education and the pressure they constantly feel have become some sort of a medal for the moms; it is truly a fierce life they are leading. Many South Korean mothers seek the reason for their existence through their children and face their lives with certain purposes that always include their children. This relates to Levine's (2006) claim that parents identify their child's success as their own success. Thus, they worry and feel anxious thinking they should do more for their children since by some means they know it will affect themselves as well:

"I have put my child in such a stressful situation. <<sighs>> I've judged her by my own standard rather than caring for her as a mom. I've urged on my daughter and pushed her so she meets my own standard. I feel uneasy but and at the same time, I praise myself for a job well done." (Minju/mother)

"I believe someday, my kids will understand and thank me for being an academically zealous mom. <<laughs>> They will know once they become parents... they will understand how I feel. At least, we, mothers, understand each other. People may call us 'overzealous' moms instigating education fever but we're just doing our best... you know, so that we won't regret later. We don't want our children to miss out on anything." (Yunhee/mother)

Mothers acquire social significance of their being by positioning themselves as collective selves. This is how they position themselves in the South Korean society; as mothers who hold critical responsibility of children's education which shapes the nation and its people. This is how they show their ability and power in their households and in society.

The key to their subtle but strong power is in generating their own mother 'brand' (Park, 2013). They have their own know-hows in managing, guiding, and teaching their children and this expertise is sought after by other mothers. They share and sometimes sell their knowledge on managing education. The ripple effect of mothers taking action and sharing ideas are big enough to bring them power as major players in education. South Korean mothers have worked hard to position themselves not only as mothers but as educators. Their devotions have paid off in a way that they are voicing out their opinions nowadays:

“Why do I devote myself in my child's education? Well... because it's my duty and a big part of my life. I need a purpose to live in this competitive world and... and this is giving me a clear reason. <<pauses>> I identify myself as a mom and to rationalise that I'm a mom, I do this. It gives me authority to have a say.”
(Gayun/mother)

4.12 Emergent Theory Derived from the Model

Based on the *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms*, a theory was conceptualised:

The rise of a unique South Korean motherhood that is optimised towards a globalised Confucian society depicts the current demands of South Korean maternal affection which is socially constructed based upon societal needs.

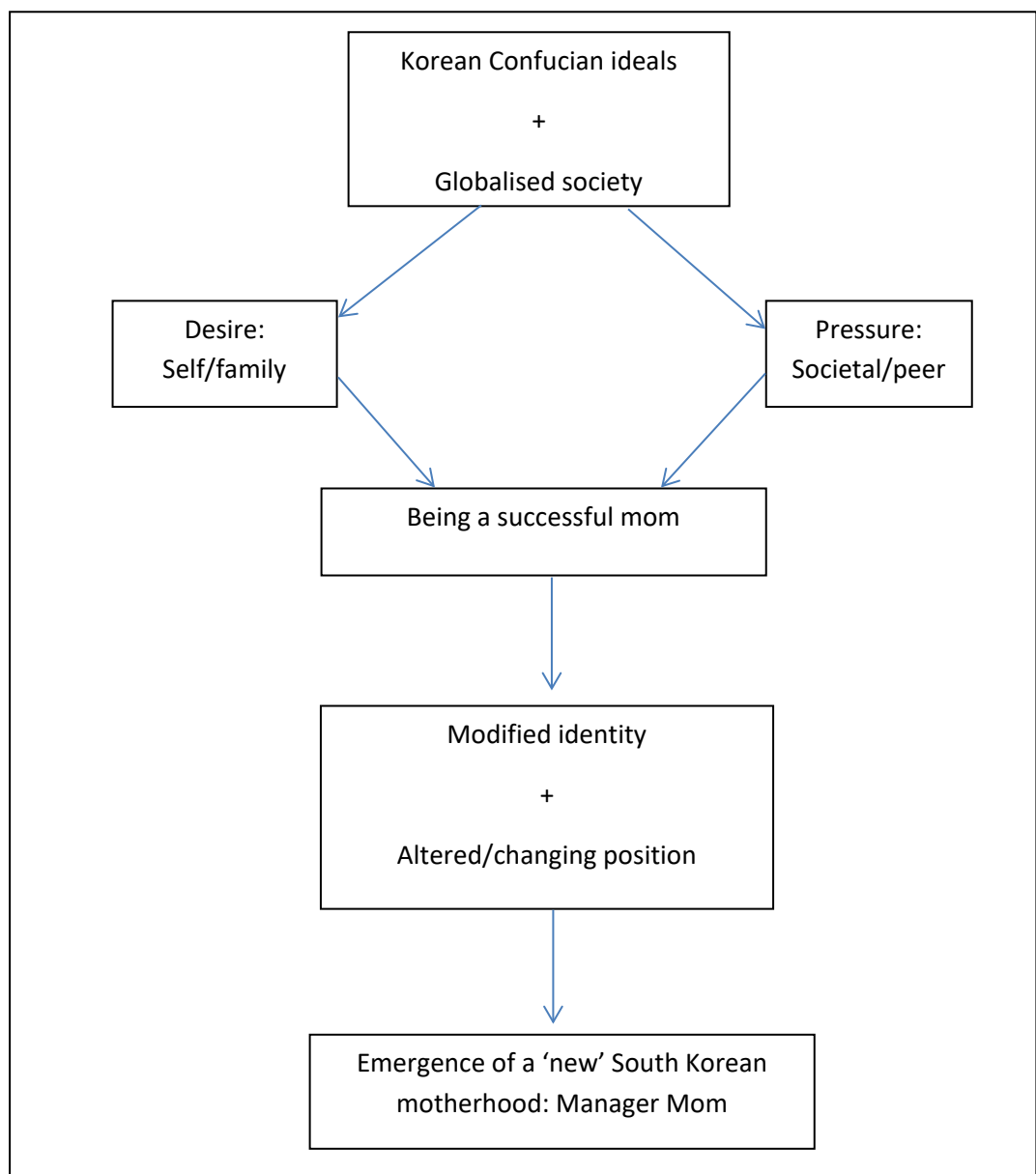
This theory, based on a social constructionist viewpoint, sets a basis for understanding the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon according to various forces that affect their lives as mothers.

I discuss the self-positioning of South Korean mothers which is implicitly grounded in the developed theory. As women and as mothers, they devote themselves to the well-being of their family, they take the job as ‘manager moms’ seriously as their new career and try to voice out their importance to the society that considers being a mom nothing but a bounden duty, that they have their own special ability; the talent to contribute to society by aggressively participating in education.

Blended with the Confucian value, the peoplehood of South Korea plays a major role in generating a unique position for these mothers within society; a mother who is a manager, who designs her child’s life, occupies a role no one can replace. When her child is intellectually successful, she becomes the envy of other mothers and receives enormous attention (Park, 2013). She is recognised as a ‘successful’ mother. In this competition-driven society, being successful especially through education is possibly ‘the easiest and the best’ way to draw attention and be rewarded as being a hard worker: both for the child and the mother. For those mothers whose children are not so academically driven, they still have no regrets in pouring all their energy and time into their children’s education since they have tried their best and given opportunities for their children to grow (Uh, et al., 2012; Lee, 2011). The urge to outshine others by the outstanding academic achievement of their children governs their mentality and lives as mothers. Under the name of self-sacrifice, as a matter of fact, hides a form of South Korean mind-set that rules manager moms’ hunger for achievement and instinct that is intricately intermingled with socio-economic power; this invisible force is a combination of pressure and struggle not only as mothers but as individuals as well. This current phenomenon has influenced mothers to re-evaluate their self-identities and reinforced their position.

I did not intend to generalise the South Korean manager mom phenomenon, rather, I focused on exploring what was happening in South Korean society regarding education, especially the English language education, and how it was being carried out by particular group of mothers. I introduce the logic of the theory in a diagram to visibly explain the process of thoughts (see Figure 4.3). Again, the model and the theory were not produced to generalise the whole mother population of South Korea; they are generated to aid the understanding of a certain phenomenon in a more effective and efficient manner.

Figure 4.3 Logic of the Theory



4.13 Review of Findings and Discussion

I examined the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon of South Korea from the perspective of mothers themselves to understand the nature embedded in this wonder. In sum, the core phenomenon under investigation can be abstracted into the *Applied Pattern Model of South Korean Manager Moms* which is comprehensively discussed throughout this chapter. This chapter attempted to answer the research questions posed by discussing the main forces driving the South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon and the actions and approaches these devoted mothers have taken to achieve their goal. Through these factors South Korean mothers shape their identities and position themselves as having a special status in the stern male-centred Confucian society.

The actions they took produced different values for mothers themselves as well as for the South Korean society. The main focus of this chapter was to critically discuss the factors that have fuelled this phenomenon; it was a complicated assortment of societal, familial, and individual expectations and pressure that these mothers had to face, and are still facing, in a globalised yet strict Confucian society. The South Korean ‘manager mom’ phenomenon is a multi-levelled social occurrence with the intertwined concepts of Confucianism and the ‘English Fever’ governing the conduct of ‘manager moms’.

The micro, meso, and macro forces driving the ‘manager moms’ to act in certain ways play significant roles in shaping these mothers’ identities, creating new power relations, and positioning them in a unique status within South Korean society. In order to achieve their goal of raising academically successful child/ren, these mothers diligently put themselves through various activities forming their own groups, enrolling themselves in different forms of educational institutions, and even moving abroad; they were actually engaged in various forms of lifelong learning.

I see mothers as the backbone of South Korean society; they hold something special. Handling multi-roles as mother, coach, manager, and mentor, she holds a crucial position in a child's journey through life; with love, she guides her child by blending her experiences with various information and constant societal changes in order to provide him/her with the best opportunities. Passionately they put all their energy into maintaining and enhancing their family name. They are strong, fierce, and fearless in taking actions for the core part of the collective family: children's education.

I discussed my participants' lives as South Korean 'manager moms' based on the model derived from their own perspectives and perceptions; the strong voices of these mothers, curating their families' future by managing and educating the core of the family, the child, governed this study and shed light on understanding their lives.

In a nation where hard work is regarded as a virtue, it is expected that people put all their might in learning and studying since failure in academic performance is seen as personal incompetence which impacts one's family members as well. Out of love and devotion, South Korean mothers commit themselves to organising their children's education; whether pressured into it or not, they feel they are actually doing something not only for their children but also for the whole family. The gratification of their conducts adds to their self-regard. They are always sensitive to what others are doing and what others know and in order to stay up to date, they group themselves with other mothers with common cause and voice their needs in their own way. In a society where educational success is heavily based upon exam results, it is not surprising that people have a great envy of those who get into the top universities. The tone of the culture, societal expectations, and the education system all play a huge part in creating a unique learning ecosystem for 'manager moms' and in driving them to push themselves further.

Interestingly, most of my participants did not see themselves as sacrificing. They said they were rewarded daily. When they saw their children studying hard and understood what they

were expected to do, that alone meant reward. They were happy and thankful that there were things they could do to help their children in their studies though they were constantly stressed and worried. Ironically, they also said that although managing their children's education was stressful and difficult, they still enjoyed the process of being 'manager moms'. They felt like they were needed and they knew they were playing a crucial role in their households. They said though they were tired they tried their best to be energetic and enthusiastic since if they showed their emotion, it might influence children and affect them negatively.

Most of the stay-home mothers said if they had not quit their careers, they might have succeeded in the workforce and might have felt proud of their achievements however if they had succeeded as career women but their children had lagged behind at school, their success at work would have meant nothing to them; they said their lives would not have been happy. This means the role as a mother is much bigger and much more important than their individual success. This thought, I believe, is socially constructed by the Confucian society they live in. Seeing themselves as mothers rather than successful individuals is a dominant feature of Korean society and being Korean – this shows the 'Koreaness'; the Confucian ideals that have shaped the 'Koreaness' still dominate and govern people's lives even with the Western education and ideology widely spread throughout the nation.

The majority of the mother participants said they were satisfied with the decision they made; quitting their jobs and becoming 'manager moms'. They said it was a good decision for the sake of their children and themselves as well. People see them as devoted mothers and even family members complimented their decisions. This is life in South Korea; giving up self for the sake of her children and based on that love and devotion, children grow to become filial to their parents, and those children will do the same for their own children in the future. Life may not be perfect for them but they are satisfied to see their devotion will be handed down to the next generation and continue on. For the continuation of the family lineage based on their dedicated life, they quietly give up their individual achievements. Collective

success meant more to them; the interesting fact was that my participants all viewed this as maternal disposition.

Financial power, Confucian family tradition, environment, moms' enthusiasm and information, national characteristics (Korean mentality), global stance and finally the children's will to succeed academically (usually set by moms) are all important aspects in understanding what 'manager mom' really means in South Korean society. Not surprisingly, perceptions of South Korean mothers are shaped according to the socio-political and socio-cultural context they were educated and live in and for the majority of my participants, they strongly agreed that the biggest achievement they accomplished so far was raising their children as scholastically successful persons; they all equated their success in life as mothers to their children's high academic attainments.

When it comes voluntary learning, 'manager moms' tended to study a lot; they clearly stated that they started it for their children, however for many of them, it was for the sake of themselves as well. When it came to English language, all agreed that it was absolutely a 'must' and they studied it again. Everyone agreed that English language is the most important subject for their children to learn and master to live a better life in South Korea and they would try their best to give their children all possible option.

It is a widely known fact that the English language is an essential tool to be mastered in becoming a global citizen. Then, if we need to learn this language anyhow, why not try our best to excel in it? It will definitely help one get into the schools he/she wants, and get a better job and people treat you differently. The same applies to moms. The better she speaks and has knowledge of the English language, the better she is served by other moms and even by teachers. Even though she started re-learning English to help her child, once people notice her and acknowledge her as an intelligent mom, she finds pleasure in her studies and this ultimately helps not only the children but the mother herself in gaining confidence and self-regard.

Some mothers I interviewed said they enjoyed teaching their children English and that it was truly interesting to actually learn it again by themselves, though not easy. They said their lives have changed. There were moms who have taken their children abroad or moms themselves who studied abroad during their schooling period. There were quite a lot of cases where these moms opened up a ‘study room’ and continued applying their study skills and their expertise in English language and made a career out of it. They studied and educated themselves further while helping and managing their children and took this opportunity to turn this into a business and gain a new career. The communities recognise this phenomenon and understand that these moms need support but the reality is that they lack system in aiding these moms.

I bring this chapter to a close with one of my participants’ quote, which arguably displays my findings in a nutshell:

“Yes, it is really important for a child to cultivate personality by playing but I can’t afford to have my daughter put less time in her English and math studies for it. I cannot deny the fact that the more I put in, the better my child performs academically. And that’s not enough. I want more for her. If she can lead the class, why not lead the school, the region, the country? <<pauses and laughs>> I am here to support her with all she needs so she can get to that point of success. I diligently move around to gather information and attend all the mothers’ group meetings. I study hard, too, yes, I do. <<laughs>> I want to give my daughter everything she deserves. This is not only for her studies but for her network and for her future. <<pauses>> Ummm, English? Yes, English is a tool that connects all this. The more you give and push your child, the more opportunity you present to your child. Why not raise her as the best of the batch?” (Minju/mother)

CHAPTER 5 Conclusion

The biggest sin in the world is not being filial to your parents.

---- Confucius

This study investigated South Korean ‘manager moms’ by listening to their voices; their stories and experiences were interpreted by cooperative collaboration with my perspective and the participants’ perceptions of their lives as ‘manager moms’.

I conducted this research to shed light on understanding ‘manager moms’ the way they understand themselves. In this final chapter I offer summary of this research, implications for theory concerning ‘manager moms’, and limitations of the study which is followed by my own reflections as a researcher based on the understandings drawn from the research. I also outline the representativeness and effects of this study in a globalising world where an impact made in one culture affects other cultures accordingly.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The main focus of this study was to explore:

- 1) Moms’ everyday lives ‘managing’ education, especially English language education
- 2) Positioning of mothers in family and society through this ‘managing’
- 3) Truncated Lifelong learning of South Korean moms undertaken for ‘managing’ purposes

To answer my research questions based upon the main focus, I have concentrated on the micro, meso, and macro conditions to scrutinise the main themes of this study through

introducing series of vignettes from fieldwork. I tried my best to present the participants' voices and their stances by deliberating the stories they shared, I hope, in a vibrant manner. When discussing social events that relate to the 'manager mom' phenomenon, I added appropriate theoretical notions to support the claims made.

I brought in the Confucian philosophy that governs the cultural norm of South Korea as well as the concept of globalisation to explain the core phenomenon in question. In order to effectively deliberate the finding of this study, I adapted the Paradigm Model by Strauss and Corbin and formed a unique model that systematically organised the findings. This model visibly explains how categories intersect and connect to each other. By applying thematic analysis, I came up with key categories which were used to lay out the summary of participants' stories, state the relationships, and formalise the findings of this study. By integrating the main themes, I generated a substantive theory; this was done by following where my data led me to answer the research questions.

Mothers devote their lives to bring up children who are the heart of society. I wanted to explore what mothers choose to do for their children and how they design their lives in a cultural setting where a person's upbringing and experience backed up by a high level of education which is believed to lead to a happier life.

Under the general notion that children cannot prosper by themselves especially in such a competitive society, mothers actively participate in their children's education by becoming 'manager moms' for the sake of the collective family; it is a fierce job, and in order to be good at it, they give up their own career and solely pledge their time to it. It is not surprising to see that these mothers perceive their children as another 'me'.

The education fever gets particularly heated when it comes to English language education; seen as a basic necessity to 'succeed', this dominant International language has become a subject to be mastered and a tool to climb up the social ladder (Park, J. K., 2009; Park, S. Y., 2009; Park & Abelman, 2004; Choi, 2002). As managers, mothers re-learn this foreign

language to effectively support and guide their children. English is no longer seen as a 'foreign' language rather it is considered as a language as important as the mother tongue, if not more.

In a society where academic cliques and educational background are deemed as the most important factors to 'succeed' (Seth, 2002; Robinson, 1994; Sorensen, 1994), mother struggle to meet the expectations of society and family. According to the majority of my participants, South Koreans believe there should be a purpose in education and directed by this social atmosphere, this purpose leads to 'success'; this greatly affects mothers who hold major authority in children's education. This societal expectation and Korean ethnic maternal affection mingled with globalisation of the world have shaped a new model of motherhood called the 'manager mom'; competitive East Asian educational culture meets the West mainly through globalisation and has interwoven different ideals and views and has created 'new' or 'changed' mothers and in the middle of it stands English language. It is interesting to note that English has by some means aided South Korean mothers to gain a critical position in the male-dominated society.

Ultimately, from all the intricate elements that form this phenomenon the most crucial point is that mothers themselves must live well and be well-supported to develop selves, family, education system, and society to make it all worthwhile (Lee, 2011). This led me to reconsider what 'success' is and what it means to be 'successful' as a South Korean; is it really all about family name, social status, and recognition?

By conducting this research, I have carefully concluded that this is about South Korean mothers constantly re-positioning and voicing themselves in society through doing something valuable: managing and designing children's education.

5.2 Contributions and the Significance of the Study

In a male dominated society, women, particularly mothers, have not had the privilege of what their male counterparts have enjoyed for a long time. Women have been considered as shadows of men and their children (Smith-Weidner, 1990). They have not received attention though they have been the biggest supporters and teachers of children.

Now that mothers' authority is growing rapidly, their voice cannot be ignored in society; understanding their lives and hearing what they have to say not only gives us opportunity to unearth mothers' perceptions and needs but also opens up a new branch of study, a truncated version of lifelong learning of South Korean 'manager moms'. I carefully put forward this study to be a small stepping stone towards understanding and improving adult education and/or foreign language education in the South Korean context.

This study also contributes to better understanding not only South Korean but numerous East Asian mothers and the reason why they are so very passionate about children's education. This phenomenon of devoted mothers managing children's education draws on the Confucian philosophy that governs most East Asian countries (Tu, 1996). This study discussed and shed light on how this old yet strong East Asian value shape mothers' identity and how they use it to position themselves in a globalising society.

Furthermore, I believe this research has brought more insights into mothers' lives in a South Korean context that is similar yet different from the famous 'tiger mom' phenomenon. East Asian mothers, however different the social and physical context may be, function in a similar way when it comes to children's education largely due to the Confucian heritage (Marginson, 2011; Cho, 1998; Slote & De Vos, 1998). However, this study has tried to discuss the difference of South Korean 'manager moms' and their conduct towards education.

The context of this particular study is South Korea, however, the phenomenon in question is not just happening in South Korea but similar forms of mothers' educational management are being witnessed in different countries (Seth, 2002); this is why I see this topic as significant since it could be examined in various societies from different angles which situate this phenomenon within a wider debate. I hope this exploratory thesis has strengthened the basis and shed light on understanding South Korean 'manager moms' by attempting to answer these questions I posed.

No one can deny the fact that when it comes to education the focus has been on students and teachers in the context of South Korea (Park, 2007). Now is the time to pay more attention to mothers who are at the centre of education since they are indeed everyone's first and best teachers.

This thesis was written to explore and understand the issues manager mothers face, how they deal with the heavy responsibility of managing children's education, and how they understand and position themselves in this complex realm. By carefully opening up the reality these mothers are facing, I believe this study has contributed in grasping their voice and perceptions of being a mom in the male-centred South Korean society.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

This study did not intend to generalise the findings and apply them to all mothers; rather, it aimed to explore those South Korean mothers who consider themselves as and are seen as 'manager moms' to understand this cultural phenomenon from their own point of views. Therefore, I have to mention that the participants were purposely chosen which means the findings of this study do not take a broad view of all South Korean mothers; it is likely that their experiences do not represent the whole mother population of South Korea.

I must acknowledge that my findings were purely based on thirty of my participants' words and perceptions; this is a small sample and cannot represent all South Korean mothers. However, I trust that it depicts this 'manager mom' phenomenon in its own way with thirty unique voices backing it up.

In order to concentrate on listening to the voices of 'manager moms', mothers who do not consider themselves as 'manager moms' or those who do not live in Kangnam, Seoul area, for example those living in rural regions, were not considered. This does not mean I intentionally left them out; I did recruit mother participants from different satellite cities to get different views. To get a broader understanding of 'manager moms', I also engaged with English language teachers and children participants who added a richer quality to this study. It must be mentioned that the participants of this study were mainly highly educated middle-class Seoulites and/or those from large cities. Though I attempted to look into the lives of mothers in other areas as well it was nominal; the focus of this study was undoubtedly based on Kangnam mothers who are seen as the standard 'manager moms'. Thus, this study cannot claim to have investigated all mothers of South Korea, rather the centre of attention was on this particular group of mothers who usually flock to the Kangnam area for the sake of their children's education. Further research on this topic could benefit from recruiting more mother participants from various cities or other countries and look into how the same phenomenon is understood and constructed within different communities, environments, and locations.

I focused on South Korean mothers throughout this research and understand that children's voice were not heavily included in it, though I did interview two children to get their perspectives. I recognise the fact that children may have different opinions on their educational journey heavily driven by their mothers, therefore the outcome of this study could have been different with more children participants involved. In light of this assumption, I believe this could lead to other studies on South Korean children's, fathers', grandparents', and teachers' perceptions. Furthermore, geese family issues were not dealt

with in-depth which could have brought more insights in to how South Korean mothers devote themselves in unfamiliar environments just for the sake of their children's English language education. I aim to build on this research topic as I move forward in my career.

I did not go into the socioeconomic gap in educational attainment in this study though it does affect education as a whole; instead I wanted to put more emphasis on mothers' voice and how they see this phenomenon. Future studies that incorporate the socioeconomic differences into the daily conduct of 'manager moms' could lead to an interesting set of findings.

I am aware of the fact that I did not take the feminist approach in discussing 'motherhood'; I wanted to explore the South Korean 'manager mom' phenomenon from an East Asian Confucian viewpoint rather than bringing in the Western concept of feminism, though it might have been an interesting approach to understand this phenomenon from a feminist perspective.

In exploring South Korean 'manager moms', I faced difficulties and realised there were limitations constraining this study especially due to the thin literature on Asian mothers. Nevertheless, through this research, it has been confirmed that regardless of social class or economic status, English language education is the focus of South Korean mothers nationwide. They are immersed in children's education and with the authority gained through this educational management, they do not hesitate to use the power they hold as mothers to wisely position themselves in a Confucian state.

5.4 Suggestions and Implications for Future Study

While examining the phenomenon of 'manager moms', I have recognised there were gaps in the literature; a lack of studies on mothers involved in children's education, when it comes

to the East Asian context, were recognisable. One of the most famous and perhaps the only widely known one discussing East Asian motherhood is Amy Chua's 'tiger mom' based in a different context, the U.S. In order to enhance what has been presented and rationalise my claims, I brought in and discussed literature on topics that have influenced this phenomenon.

Current literature on this topic which discusses mothers on children's education focuses on what and how they do it, not 'why' (Uh, et al., 2012). Not much has been investigated and said about the core of the issue; mothers' voices were silenced under the name of womanly duties. There are few studies done on South Korean 'manager moms' to my knowledge and therefore I believe this study is unique and original in its own right; I do acknowledge there are a few books that deliver stories of South Korean mothers which I draw upon to discuss.

The lack of study done on lifelong learning from perspectives of mothers also motivated me to investigate more on this topic; though the demand for more contents and supports towards adult learning is increasing rapidly, there is a shortage of literature in discussing parents' education in terms of lifelong learning. I believe this to be an important part of lifelong education that South Korean mothers specifically adapt in order to aid their children's education. There are numerous literatures discussing lifelong learning as an important policy in education across the globe yet it is clear that studies on adult education concentrating on different aspects are weak.

While conducting this research, I have come to realise there are various ways to expand the investigation of the 'manager mom' phenomenon. Examining this from different angles may bring fresh ideas in supporting parents and education of the country as a whole. Here, I present recommendations for further research in the area of parents', especially mothers', educational management.

In order to meet the needs of 'manager moms', the community as a whole should pay more attention to enhancing support programmes mothers can rely on; my participants did

mention they would like to have more community support and a more dynamic relationship with experts in the field of education. They were in need of mentoring and clear guidance as to how they should manage and/or teach their children. A detailed supervision and mentoring system led by education experts and experienced mothers could help support numerous mothers who are lost or struggling to guide their children. This could be examined from the community perspective as a large lifelong learning project for mothers and fathers actively engaged in managing education. By supporting mothers, it not only will benefit the mothers but will also provide opportunities for them to help develop the community by volunteer works and educational projects. A development of the concept is needed to appreciate ‘manager moms’ as developing semi-professional mentors, life coaches and designers, teachers, and counsellors all-in-one. Educational methods for these mothers who are committed to this multi-task position are desired so that they can improve by adapting the means into their own way of guiding children.

In this study, I paid attention to mothers’ voices and in doing so I thought listening to children’s opinions should be a must in supporting ‘manager moms’. However, due to the scope of this research I had to limit myself from hearing children’s voice more thoroughly. Further research would benefit by examining children’s opinion of educational management done by their parents. Researchers are encouraged to examine this multifaceted phenomenon with different sets of questions by looking at it from the children’s stance. In exploring the complex and dynamic relationship between mothers and children as managers and learners, and coaches and apprentices, this field of study may benefit from understanding more about the parent-child relationship in a new dimension.

It is recommended that further studies should be conducted on mothers’ motivation towards their lifelong learning. The ‘manager mom’ phenomenon is not only about mothers devoting selves to children’s education but also about their own development; since learning something new and re-learning a foreign language mean a lot for both the individuals and for society (Min, 2007), the significance of lifelong learning should be highlighted. This should

be investigated systematically to improve existing programmes and come up with a better adult education curriculum. This can also lead to studies on effects and the role of English language education in the field of lifelong learning in the context of various countries that study English as a foreign language.

Furthermore, deeper understanding of mothers' and children's motivation and the power relations amongst mothers and children, children and their siblings, children and their friends, mothers and other mothers, and mothers and teachers could lead to new ways of viewing the 'manager mom' phenomenon. The creation of complex yet vibrant power relations between and amongst agents opens up a new ground for future studies on educational management.

Another possible study that I believe could encourage understanding of parental management of children's education is in investigating different management styles of mothers in different regions, possibly in various countries. I have focused on active 'manager moms' here, however, there are mothers who are truly passionate about education yet are laid back and guide their children at their own pace rather than constantly comparing with others. In light of examining different types of educational management carried out by mothers, detailed studies on regional differences could bring in various aspects and ideas on how and why they differ from one another and/or how they adapt to the 'Kangnam' way, which is seen as the dominant managerial form (Kim, 2006). It would be fascinating to focus on listening to mothers from different regions; I did manage to include perceptions of mothers from satellite cities yet I do have to admit that the majority of the participants were from the Kangnam, Seoul area.

I also believe grandparental management in children's education is a critical area to investigate; as women struggle to make a decision between becoming a 'manager mom' and maintaining their careers, many grandparents tender their services to help out their daughters and/or daughters-in-law by becoming 'manager grandmas' (Kim, E. H., 2013). They utilise

their knowledge and know-how to guide their grandchildren's education and in doing so, face various issues and feel in need of assistance. This is another phenomenon that stems from where the Confucian minded 'manager mom' meets the rapidly changing globalising world; these 'manager mothers' continue being educational managers by becoming 'manager grandmas'. This also comes from my experience as a teacher; I have had many chances to communicate with grandparents of my students. They were keen on getting educational information as well understanding the importance of studying the English language. They were deeply involved in their grandchildren's education feeling obligated to guide them. These grandmothers also actively participate in lifelong learning programmes offered by community-based facilities, and in/formal adult schools.

I implicitly mentioned the importance of the 'mother-brand English' (Yoo & Lee, 2006) method of teaching that many South Korean mothers acquire and utilise to aid their children's language education. Mothers as educational managers are anxious to guide their children more effectively and efficiently; in order to excel in teaching and learning the English language, they have created a new curriculum, their own version of teaching the language (Uh, et al., 2012; Yoo & Lee, 2006). There is a lack of literature on 'mom-brand English' teaching which is vital in the field of language education since home is the place where children first start learning language and mothers are often their first teachers. The methods, resources mothers use and their know-how should be researched widely and comprehensively to gain insights into 'mom-brand' foreign language education.

I concentrated on exploring mothers' behaviour on their children's education in the given conditions; this study can be further expanded by investigating those parents who take a step further and move to English speaking Western countries (geese families) and how they cope with the situation there which was mentioned briefly in this research.

There were many different areas related to this topic that I would have loved to discuss and explore more but could not due to the scope of the study. Studies on star tutors, geese

families, and manager grandparents that emerged from the ‘manager mom’ phenomenon and/or are tightly related to issues surrounding the English language education in South Korea could be further pursued to benefit this socio-cultural change in educational management by mothers.

Teaching and learning are reflective processes that help mothers develop themselves as educational managers and home teachers which is why this topic is worthwhile exploring. I hope this thesis can spark an interest in mothers and their educational management of their children in foreign language education.

5.5 Personal Reflections

I still cannot forget what my mother repeatedly said when I was suffering from my studies; “If you study hard now, good days will definitely come”. My mother has been a typical South Korean ‘manager mom’ till my sister and I entered university. In fact, she still is a ‘manager mom’ with another role assigned to her: a manager grandma. My mother constantly contacts me giving information on changes and trends of South Korean education and discusses my future with me till now. My sister, who is an ardent ‘manager mom’, devotes her time and energy into planning and managing my nephew and niece’s education and consults our mother all the time. She gladly gave up her successful career as a businesswoman to become a full-time ‘manager mom’. She continuously seeks advice from our mother who is an expert in educational management. My nephew and niece have two managers planning and designing their academic journeys: a ‘manager mom’ and a manager grandma.

Looking back, my educational journey has largely been led by my mother’s plan. Under her management, I have strived to be a ‘good’ student and an obedient daughter. It was always nice to see my parents feeling proud of me and my sister when our names were announced in

the honour roll and the dean's list. I remember my mother saying that the greatest joy in her life was seeing me and my sister succeed academically. Our high grade/mark was mom's pride, happiness, and a tool to position herself amongst others by voicing up her opinion more in family gatherings and moms' group. My family was a goose family; my mother took me and my sister to America for our studies and dad remained in South Korea to financially support us. My parents have been more than generous when it came to investing in our education though I know it must have caused financial hardship for them.

Do I see my success as my parent's success? My academic achievement did not happen just because I did my best; I believe I was able to come to this stage due to familial sacrifice and the endless devotion of my parents. What I have accomplished belongs to my whole family. This is the way South Koreans have lived and this is the way we still adhere to; this is being South Korean. Thus, the least I can do to pay back my family and perform my filial duty is to not let them down. The essence of familism is shown here; sacrificing and trying one's best for the whole family. I have not yet asked this question to my mother – Does she think she has been rewarded somehow for her devotion? I cannot design my life just for myself; I need to acknowledge my parents' devotion when planning my future since my life is not just mine, it is my family's.

This research has influenced how I see myself and my family, especially my mother. After all, as I mentioned, I am a product of the South Korean system myself and my mother has greatly influenced me with her educational management backed up by endless support and relentless devotion.

Now my sister, a passionate 'manager mom', is a newer version of what I have seen in my mom. Armed with Western education and living in a diverse environment, she is now taking the lead with numerous South Korean mothers in developing selves and revealing their passion and ability symbolising the new motherhood evolved through global impact and changing cultural expectations. They stand humbly as women who are multitaskers, coaches,

directors, CEOs, wives, sisters, and friends but at the end of the day, they stand firmly and most proudly as mothers.

As a daughter, sister, and friend of these strong women, I see where they are going with their lives, what they want and dream of. Again, throughout this study, I was awed by the passion and devotion mothers hold for their children. This not only affected the way I looked into my data but it has also influenced how I think of them; I have learned how to view things from different angles and listen carefully with an open mind since this, I believe, is the most important way of learning. Strauss & Corbin (1990) emphasise that researcher's personal experience is a significant asset for a study; I very much agree with this claim and laid my experience as a foundation for conducting this research.

I end this section with a quote from one of my mother participants who passionately summed up her current life and devotion towards her son's education:

"I think the only reason people fail is because they do not try their best. I don't want to regret later thinking that I did not do my best as a mom. I support my son as hard as I can and I hope, no, I think, he knows that I'm trying my best. So he should do his best, too! <<laughs>> I always tell him we only live our lives once . . . there is no turning back. I want him to know that's why we have to do our best every moment of our lives in a given situation . . . and right now, for him, studying, and for me, managing is the way we live our lives to the fullest." (Yunhee/mother)

5.6 Researcher Reflexivity

The significance of researcher reflexivity cannot be left out in doing research since researcher's personal values, identities, and beliefs impact the research process (Wellington, 2015; Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Being reflexive calls upon the researcher to be critically conscious of his/her personal account of self-location (Pillow, 2003). In this sub-

section, I reflect back to the whole process of conducting this research in anticipation of understanding myself and how I influenced this piece of work.

I consciously tried to reflect on myself throughout the whole of this research; whenever I noticed and realised something could change to better the study and assist the participants, based on my reflection, I incorporated new ideas into my fieldwork and writings to be a reflexive researcher. I not only wanted to improve this study but also wanted to grow from this experience. This journey of conducting research and writing a PhD thesis was a truly emotional and thought-provoking process; it brought out a different side of myself to be questioned and studied, to deeply understand what I value in life and construct my social world that shapes me to be a part of different societies with the ability to examine issues and phenomena with various viewpoints. I truly appreciate this PhD experience that has brought new aspects of exploring social issues that affect everyday lives.

Whilst writing this thesis, I continually reminded myself that this should be a useful piece of writing that is empowering and compelling. However small it may be, it should be significant in its own way to contribute to the field; I felt the pressure every time I opened up my thesis file to write. I was constantly stressed out yet it gave me a reason to continue on writing. I believe I have grown a bit as a person not to mention, as a novice researcher.

I struggled with the scope of my thesis as well; I was not sure if I was going the way I was supposed to go with my data and so many different questions tormented me. Am I isolating ‘other’ mothers? Did I represent my participants in a just way? What if I made the wrong judgment and included those who do not consider themselves as ‘manager moms’ as ‘manager moms’? I still question myself and I am glad that I am still questioning since I believe it means I have done my best at the moment and am learning from it.

I cannot leave out discussing about my awareness of self while conducting this research. I knew I was going into this with various identities: as a South Korean with Western background, a teacher, a friend, and a researcher. I was not sure from what point of view I

was exploring this phenomenon. It was not clear what social perspectives were on a researcher like myself and the constraints I would likely face. Some mother participants were open enough to tell me, in the most respectful manner, that I would not understand them fully since I do not have children. I came home and thought about this and did agree with my participants; I could not possibly understand it the way they understand it. I had to keep on asking myself of my own identity and positionality.

However I had faith in myself as an experienced teacher who has earned trust from many mothers. It helped me immensely that I have studied in the U.S. and have worked as an English language teacher in one of the most prominent language institutions in South Korea. The relationship I have had with some of the mother participants led me to more participants and since they felt comfortable with me, they were quite open and active in responding and asking me questions as well.

I had to look back at my educational journey and my perceptions of South Korean education in order to write this thesis. Am I looking at this phenomenon with a pure South Korean mind? Is my American education somehow affecting me to see this in a different way? Did my participants see me as a Korean, a Korean-American, or someone who is positioned between two nationalities? Has that had an effect on this study? I still cannot give a clear answer to myself; however through this process, I have understood myself a bit better.

I have consulted my mother who has been a passionate educator and a ‘manager mom’ herself and my sister who is currently an active ‘manager mom’, to listen to their stories and get insights for fresh ideas and better understand where I stand in this research. I myself, a product of Koreanised Confucian ideals integrated with American education, have come to be a unique being under the guidance of a devoted ‘manager mom’. Though I was educated in America, I was strictly managed by a Confucian minded manager mom and have grown up as a Western-minded Confucian value driven East Asian who has been trained and taught in a very ‘South Korean’ way. I grew up seeing my mother give up her career for the sake

of my sister and my education and my father sacrificing a great deal to send us to America. It was obvious that they have put our education as their first priority. As someone who has gone through all this ‘education feverish’ state and who has a ‘manager mom’, it was natural for me to immediately engage in the experiences of my participants and immerse in their stories. This again has empowered this thesis in a positive way.

I followed Strauss & Corbin’s (1998) guidance throughout the whole process of conducting this research; they advise researchers to constantly develop selves to be flexible, open to criticism, be sensitive, devote and immerse into the research, and critically examining the issue and understand the circumstances. By diligently taking these steps, I have learned to listen to others’ voices more carefully as well as to listen to my own voice. By reflecting back at my actions and thoughts, I have grown and developed to actually use what I have learned from the past for a better future; to be reflexive is to understand my past and utilise it in a positive way to better myself as an individual and as a researcher.

5.7 Concluding Remarks

Living as a mother is a continuous self-developing process that requires devotion. Mothers constantly exert themselves to improve for the sake of their children. Motherhood is indeed a complex, confusing yet dynamic and exciting journey which is impossible to explain in words; educating a child is a process of facing and re-facing various dominant power created by a socio-political system that heavily relies on cultural distinctiveness (Lee, 2011).

Mothers these days no longer are passive, especially when it comes to children’s education; rather, they are actively engaged in managing their children’s educational journey making sure their children do not fall behind others in the overly competitive environment (Lee, 2011; Kim, 2006). By designing and supervising children’s education, mothers take on several different roles as teachers, mentors, counsellors, coaches, and directors (Kim, 2006;

Kim, 2004). In doing so, they position themselves in a unique place in society and at home. They fully engage themselves in this 'war' to win; they tactically befriend other mothers and at the same time fiercely compete with one another. This frankly shows the importance of raising academically successful children and what it means to these mothers. Being noticed as a devoted mother with a 'successful' child earns her more support and praise. When people talk about someone's success, they tend to focus on the parents' devotion which shows the Confucian way of raising a child, educating him/her, and upholding the family name. Self-positioning of these mothers in household and society should be given more attention especially in this male-dominated society where children's educational success is the way to be recognised as successful mothers and as women.

Society constantly pressures mothers and children to do better (Lee, 2011); when they walk, they are expected to run and when they run they are again pressured to fly. The overwhelming atmosphere created by society that values 'success' and the desire to fulfil one's responsibility as a good daughter, a good wife, and a good mother have produced 'manager moms'.

Throughout the process of managing their children's education, mothers feel they are not treated as individual beings yet they endure their loss of maintaining the individual identity to live for their children who they believe are the core of family and a huge part of themselves. They diligently live up to meet the expectations given by family and society. This is what they accept as their mission in life as mothers.

Living as a mother is probably one of the most difficult jobs which is full of surprises; during the process of educating children, mothers feel and receive joy that they have never imagined to get and learn to love in a different way that they have never expected. Sleepless nights of tears and worries drag mothers down, nevertheless, they are ready to start over again because their children always come first. Mothers may even hate themselves for having weaknesses and when it comes to their children, they are even harsher towards

themselves. That is, they always struggled to be the best mother and would not tolerate even a small mistake they make. However, by trying to forgive themselves for the mistakes they have made towards their children's education, they grow as mothers. My participants have mentioned that the only reason one fails is due to lack of effort; they applied this conception towards their management of their children's education. They said they could not afford to be a failure and this conviction drives South Korean mothers to passionately manage children's educational journey. Learning gives the largest production with the lowest risk (Kim, M., 2009); mothers armed with managerial know-how and the ability to foresee what is happening in society indeed are vital resources in education.

No one can deny that living as a mother is the most honourable profession and the passion and devotion mothers hold towards children and family will never cease to exist. I close this thesis with a quote from one of my participants to sum up the reason why they become 'manager moms' in South Korea and bear all the pressure:

"Out of love! I believe we all do what we do for our children out of love. What else is there?" (Hani/mother participant)

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Appendix I: Ethical Approval Letter



The
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Sheffield.

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Dear Ji Hye Jaime Chung

ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER

The Role of English Language in a Unique Context of Short-term Lifelong Education: A Case Study of South Korean 'Manager Moms'

Thank you for submitting your ethics application. I am writing to confirm that your application has now been approved, and you can proceed with your research.

This letter is evidence that your application has been approved and should be included as an Appendix in your final submission.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely



Professor Dan Goodley
Chair of the School of Education Ethics Review Panel

CC Dr Mark Payne

Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

(English version)

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project:

Exploring South Korean ‘Manager Moms’ in a Unique Context of Truncated Lifelong Learning

Name of Researcher: Ji Hye Jaime Chung

Participant Identification Number for this project:

initial box

Please

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated <i>[insert date]</i> for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. <i>Insert contact number here of lead researcher/member of research team (as appropriate).</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree that the researcher can interview my child in my presence.
(only for mother/children participants) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to take part in the above research project. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of Participant
(or legal representative)

Date

Signature

Name of person taking consent
(if different from lead researcher)
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Date

Signature

Lead Researcher
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Date

Signature

(Korean version)

□ □ □ □ :

☐ ☐ ‘☐☐☐ ☐’, ☐☐☐ ☐☐ ☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐

Exploring South Korean ‘Manager Moms’ in a Unique Context of Truncated Lifelong Learning

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Appendix III: Information Sheet

(English version)

Information Sheet A

For mother participants

Research Project Title:

Exploring South Korean ‘Manager Moms’ in a Unique Context of Truncated Lifelong Learning

Invitation to participate:

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project which involves South Korean mothers in ‘managing’ their children’s education in informal and/or non-formal ways, especially in English language education. The study aims to understand the needs and perceptions of South Korean mothers in pursuing English language education for their kids and for themselves as well. Before you decide to take part in the study, please read this information sheet carefully to understand what to expect from participating. Please feel free to ask questions if you find anything unclear before you choose to take part.

What is the purpose of this study?

The objective of this research is to better understand South Korean mothers with pre-school/school age children on how they guide and/or teach English language outside of school (mainly home). South Korean mothers sacrifice a lot for their children’s education and these days many parents actually brush up their English language skills in order to help their kids’ education using various tools. There is however privation of resources for motivated moms presumably due to the lack of attention to these important figures (moms) in English language education.

I believe it is important to consider the experiences, needs, and perceptions of those who teach the language informally in a non-formal environment and investigate what these South Korean mothers actually gain from their activities they are engaged in for their children as well as for themselves.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are a South Korean mother currently trying to learn and/or understand how to teach English language to your children by utilising self-directed learning skills and various methods. Your reflections on your experiences and thoughts will be of great value to this research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary therefore you can decide whether to participate or not. You may withdraw from the study at any time if you wish. You do not need to explain why you are withdrawing.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be participating in an exploratory study: an hour long interview followed by an hour long observation will be conducted. During the observation, your child(ren) may be involved in the scene. The main focus is going to be on you, the mother, however, there might be a chance that I may ask some questions to your child(ren) after the observation, in your presence. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview and/or a focus group meeting. You can choose convenient time and venues for the interviews as you wish and the observation will take place, preferably at your home, under your consent. You will receive a phone call from the researcher before home visits to make sure you are still willing to have the researcher at your place. The interviews will be audio recorded with your permission and all recordings will be deleted upon completion of the study. You will also be encouraged to write short diaries/logs during the 10-12 week period. The recordings, transcriptions, and the diaries will not be shared with any other person or party. If you wish to have your diaries back, they will be returned to you. You will receive a copy of the entire transcription.

What do I have to do?

There is nothing you should prepare for the project. All you need to do is share your thoughts and ideas which, again, are completely voluntary.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in this study. However, if, by any chance, you or your child(ren) feel uncomfortable with any process of the interviews and/or the observation, please inform the researcher or her supervisor right away so that we can look into the issue immediately.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no immediate benefits involved in this study. However, having the opportunity to reflect on your practice and contributing to research that will shed light on understanding and supporting South Korean moms and learners of English language, should be considered as potential benefit. Since this research will be undertaken as a PhD project in Education, the emphasis is on understanding South Korean 'manager moms' more deeply and based on this understanding, I hope to develop recommendations for future use.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If this happens, you will be notified immediately and the reason(s) will be provided fully.

What if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher as soon as possible. If you wish to report something to an official figure, please do so by contacting Dr. Mark Payne. In case you want to bring an issue to the University, the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) will be in your service (<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/ethicscommittee>).

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All data collected during this project will be kept strictly confidential. All the audio recordings will be deleted as soon as the thesis has been submitted and the transcribed data will be kept locked in a secure place where only the researcher has access. After the submission of the thesis, the transcribed data will be destroyed. You may request an electronic copy of the thesis after the completion of the study. The precise date of completion will be notified.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results drawn from this project will be used exclusively for the researcher's PhD thesis. There might be a possibility that the results will be used for academic journal articles or other publications as well as conference papers. If this is the case, I assure you that you will not be identified in any way.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised and funded by Ji Hye Jaime Chung, PhD student, School of Education, The University of Sheffield. Email: jhjchung1@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervised by Dr. Mark Payne, Lecturer, School of Education, The University of Sheffield. Email: mark.payne@sheffield.ac.uk

If you have any questions or concerns about the conduct of the study please contact J. Jaime Chung. If, subsequently, you feel that your complaint has not been dealt properly, you can contact the project supervisor, Dr. Mark Payne.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been subject to ethics review and approved by the School of Education Ethics Review Panel of the University of Sheffield.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep

(Korean version)

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(English version)

Information Sheet B

For teacher participants

Research Project Title:

Exploring South Korean ‘Manager Moms’ in a Unique Context of Truncated Lifelong Learning

Invitation to participate:

You are invited to participate in a PhD research project which involves South Korean mothers in ‘managing’ their children’s education in informal and/or non-formal ways, especially in English language education. The study aims to understand the needs and perceptions of South Korean mothers in pursuing English language education for their kids and for themselves as well. Before you decide to take part in the study, please read this information sheet carefully to understand what to expect from participating. Please feel free to ask questions if you find anything unclear before you choose to take part.

What is the purpose of this study?

The objective of this research is to better understand South Korean mothers with pre-school/school age children on how they guide and teach English language outside of school (mainly home). South Korean mothers sacrifice a lot for their children’s education and many mothers actually brush up their English language skills in order to help their kids’ education using various tools. There is however privation of resources for motivated moms presumably due to the lack of attention to these important figures (mothers) in English language education.

I believe it is important to consider the experiences, needs, and perceptions of those who teach the language informally in a non-formal environment and investigate what these South Korean mothers actually gain from their activities they are engaged in for their children as well as for themselves.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are an English language teacher currently working in South Korea and have relevant understandings in relation to Korean parents, especially mothers, on how they go about gathering educational information and concentrate on their children’s education. Your reflections on your experiences and thoughts will be of great value to this research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary therefore you can decide whether to participate or not. You may withdraw from the study at any time if you wish. You do not need to explain why you are withdrawing.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be participating in an hour long interview. You can choose a convenient time and venue for the interview. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission and all

recordings will be deleted upon completion of the study. The recordings and transcription will not be shared with any other person or party. You will receive a copy of the entire transcription to make sure it is accurate.

What do I have to do?

There is nothing you should prepare for the project. All you need to do is share your thoughts and ideas, which, again, is completely voluntary.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in this study. However, if, by any chance, you feel uncomfortable with any process of the interview, please inform the researcher or her supervisor right away so that we can look into the issue immediately.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There will be no immediate benefits involved in this study. However, having the opportunity to reflect on your experience and contributing to research that will shed light on understanding and supporting South Korean moms and learners of English language, should be considered as potential benefit. Since this research will be undertaken as a PhD project in Education, the emphasis is on understanding South Korean 'manager moms' more deeply and based on this understanding, I hope to develop recommendations for future use.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

If this happens, you will be notified immediately and the reason(s) will be provided fully.

What if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher as soon as possible. If you wish to report something to an official figure, please do so by contacting Dr. Mark Payne. In case you want to bring an issue to the University, the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) will be in your service (<http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/committees/ethicscommittee>).

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All data collected during this project will be kept strictly confidential. All the audio recordings will be deleted as soon as the thesis has been submitted and the transcribed data will be kept locked in a secure place where only the researcher has access. After the submission of the thesis, the transcribed data will be destroyed. You may request an electronic copy of the thesis after the completion of the study. The precise date of completion will be notified.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results drawn from this project will be used exclusively for the researcher's PhD thesis. There might be a possibility that the results will be used for academic journal articles or other publications as well as conference papers. If this is the case, I assure you that you will not be identified in any way.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised and funded by Ji Hye Jaime Chung, PhD student, School of Education, The University of Sheffield. Email: jhjchung1@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervised by Dr. Mark Payne, Lecturer, School of Education, The University of Sheffield.
Email: mark.payne@sheffield.ac.uk

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the study please contact J. Jaime Chung. If, subsequently, you feel that your complaint has not been dealt properly, you can contact the project supervisor, Dr. Mark Payne.

Who has ethically reviewed the project?

This project has been subject to ethics review and approved by the School of Education Ethics Review Panel of the University of Sheffield.

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed consent form to keep

(Korean version)

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Appendix IV: Interview Questions

(English versions)

For Mother Participants

1. Please elaborate on your daily routine.
2. Can you tell me what you think about your decision on giving up your career for the sake of your children's education? Any regrets or satisfaction? (only for stay-home manager moms)
3. Why do you think your children's education is more important than your own career?
4. What does English language mean to you? What is your thought on 'English fever' of South Korea?
5. What do you think English is to children?
6. How do you study English in order to be a 'home teacher' to your kids? What sort of English do you try to master? (Do you go to private academies, do you study by yourself and/or why do you use that particular method? Do you think it fits well into your style of learning and teaching or does it suit your children?)
7. By teaching your children English language and helping out with their studies, what do you think you and your children gain from the process? Does it help you in any way?
8. What kind of help do/did you need learning English for your kids?
9. When you notice that your children are struggling with the huge burden of studying English, what kind of decision will you try to make as a 'manager' of his/her education?
10. What kind of help, influence, and/or pressure do other family members or friends put on the children and you?
11. For you, as a mom, what does success of your children through education mean?
12. What do you gain from moms' groups? In your opinion, what is the position of working moms within those groups or in general?
13. Can you tell me about moms' groups? How does it operate? Are there tensions and competition?
14. How will you utilise your know-hows and skills you have accumulated so far?
15. There could be other ways to use your skills and develop your ability to help your children and others. If, by any chance, the society and the government support you, would you be willing to continue working in education in a non-formal/informal way?
16. After sending your children off to college, how would you feel? Won't you feel a bit empty? Do you have other plans?
17. I'd like to ask you to freely talk about what you have in mind on being a South Korean mother and how you feel about 'English fever', cultural environment, devotions of mothers, and anything related to your children's education. Do you consider yourself as a manager mom?

For Teacher Participants

1. As an English language teacher, how important is English language education in South Korea? Why do you think so?
2. You must have met and talked with so-called 'manager moms' during counselling period. What have you noticed and how did you feel while talking to them?

3. There are many mothers who quit their jobs in order to become educational ‘managers’ for their children. Have you seen these mothers studying and learning English by themselves to help out their children?
4. As a teacher, do you think it is helpful and/or effective for mothers to learn English by themselves and teach or guide their children?
5. What kind of advice do these mothers seek from you? Are there any noticeable questions you think is quite unique or interesting? What sort of help do you think these mothers need?
6. In your opinion, do ‘manager moms’ take lead in shaping children’s education?
7. How do you see this phenomenon of mothers quitting jobs to ‘manage’ children’s education?
8. How are ‘manager moms’ perceived at schools by teachers and by society as a whole?
9. There could be something else that we are not seeing. There could be different reasons for these moms for quitting jobs and becoming ‘manager moms’. What do you think?
10. In your opinion, what could be the benefits of moms studying English language by themselves?
11. Do you think there are differences or can you see any differences in educational progress between stay-at-home moms’ children and working mom children?
12. Have you heard of private moms’ groups? What do you think about the ability to gather and access information and the power they hold?
13. In order to bring out positive effect from this ‘manager mom’ phenomenon, what sort of help do you think is needed by moms and how can society help? These mothers have been successful career women and there must be a way they can contribute to the educational community.
14. I’d like you to share your ideas and thoughts on English language education in South Korea, parents, especially moms on how they influence the educational community.

For Children Participants

1. Can you tell me how you feel about studying English with your mom? (Or how you feel about your mom being your educational manager)
2. What do you think is the difference amongst studying English at school, private academies, and at home with your mom?
3. How would you have your mom help you with your studies? Is there a way you think that suits your study style?
4. Do you think the information your mom has on education help you in any way?
5. Who else in your family are helpful when it comes to your studies?
6. Why do you think you need to study?
7. How important is English (to you)?
8. How much time do you allocate in studying English? What do you think will make learning English more enjoyable and exciting? How should teachers and parents help you?

(Korean versions)

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Appendix V: Focus Group Questions

(English version)

1. Please share your opinion on English language education in South Korea. It could be something about exams, success, pressure, moving abroad, or moms, yourselves.
2. What is a moms' group? How does it usually operate?
3. What do you think is the relationship between South Korean academic credentialism and cultural norm or national philosophy?
4. How do you identify 'manager moms'?
5. Please share your experiences living as South Korean mothers. What are the pressures? How are you developing as individuals or as mothers by living as 'manager moms'?

(Korean version)

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Appendix VI: Open-ended Email Questions

(English version)

1. Why did you decide to take your child(ren) abroad? How did other family members react to this decision?
2. Please elaborate on the life of goose mom including your feelings.
3. What are the pros and cons of living abroad for your child(ren)'s education?
4. It must be difficult overseas, but what additional actions do you take to aid your child/ren's education there?

(Korean version)

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Appendix VII: Participants' Profile - Total 30 participants

All names used in this research are anonymised by pseudonyms.

| Total: 12 | Stay-home moms | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Name/ Age | Education | Work experience | child(ren) / age(s) |
| Seoul-Kangnam, South Korea | Seri (39) | BA (USA) | 5 years | 2 sons (10,9) |
| | Hani (35) | BA (USA) | 4 years | Son (9), daughter (5) |
| | Minju (39) | MA (USA) | 10 years | Daughter (12) |
| | Jihee (38) | MA (France) | 7 years | Son (10) |
| | Mira (37) | BA (Korea) | 10 years | Son (10), daughter (9) |
| | Yejin (39) | BA (Korea) | 14 years | 2 daughters (9,7) |
| | Yunhee (42) | MA (Korea) | 15 years | Son (14), daughter (9) |
| | Somi (41) | PhD (Korea) | 13 years | Son (13), daughter (9) |
| Seoul-other, South Korea | Gayun (40) | BA (USA) | 12 years | Daughter (11) |
| | Seolhyun (36) | MA (Korea) | 15 years | Son (11) |
| Satellite Cities, South Korea | Younga (37) | MA (USA) | 4 years | Son (13) |
| | Bobae (37) | BA (Korea) | 11 years | 2 sons (9, 6) |

| Total: 8 | Working moms | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Name/ Age | Education | Work experience | child(ren) / age(s) |
| Seoul-Kangnam, South Korea | Haeju (39) | BA (USA) | Famous online English teacher | Twin daughters (11) |
| | Minsuh (43) | BA (Korea) | Office worker | Daughter (15) |
| Seoul-other, | Yura (40) | MA (Canada) | English teacher at a cram school | Son (10), daughter (4) |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| South Korea | Naeun (41) | BA (USA) | Office worker | 2 daughters (10,8) |
| | Yunkyung (45) | BA (Korea) | Hair designer | Son (15) |
| Satellite Cities, South Korea | Jinju (36) | BA (Korea) | Math teacher | Son (5), daughter (7) |
| | Eunhae (36) | BA (Korea) | Civil servant | Twins- Son, daughter (6) |
| | Jiyoun (38) | BA (Korea) | Programmer | Son (7), daughter (10) |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------|---|----------------------------|
| Total: 5 | Others: teachers, mom-to-be, older mom | | | |
| | Name/ Age | Education | Work experience | child(ren) / age(s) |
| Seoul-Kangnam, South Korea | Sumin (50) | BA (Korea) | Older mom who has been through all the 'managing' | 2 sons (25,18) |
| | Haegyo (30) | BA (UK) | English language teacher | Son (2) |
| Seoul-other, South Korea | Sora (37) | MA (Korea) | English language teacher | None |
| Satellite Cities, South Korea | Heesun (34) | BA (Korea) | English language teacher | None |
| | Mihee (36) | PhD (Korea) | Researcher | Mom-to-be |

| | | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total: 3 | Overseas moms | | | |
| | Name/ Age | Education | Work experience | child(ren) / age(s) |
| Canada | Suji (40) | MA (Korea) | 11 years | Daughter (12) |
| Singapore | Taeyeon (39) | BA (USA) | 5 years | Son (10) |
| USA | Yoona (36) | PhD (USA) | 9 years | 2 sons (10, 9) |

| | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Total: 2 | Children | | | |
| | Name/ Age | Education | No. of cram schools attending currently | Siblings |
| Seoul | Sangwoo (14) | Middle school student | 5 | 1 sister |
| Seoul | Dasom (12) | Elementary school student | 7 | none |

Appendix VIII: NVivo Codes

| 5 Main Categories | <i>NVivo</i> Nodes (upper-level codes) |
|--|---|
| ‘Successful’ mother and ‘successful’ child: purpose and achievement | Sacrifice, devotion, family, motivation, relationship, system, culture, status, peer pressure |
| Influential values: Koreanised Confucianism and globalisation | English language, success, power, value, ethnic root, national characteristics (Korean mentality), philosophy |
| Life of Manager Moms: tensions and competitions | Jealousy, competitions, system, power, success, private education, position |
| Mothers in action: Lifelong learning and joining in mothers’ groups | Relationship, environment, background, satisfaction, belonging, self & child, style |
| Self-regard (Consequences): positioning self in a male-dominated society | Happiness, self-regard, empowerment, women/mother, life |

