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Leisure and subjective well-being of parents of Korean transnational-split families

KangJae Jerry Lee¹ · Sunhwan Hwang² · Monika Stodolska³

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Abstract

This study examined leisure and subjective well-being (SWB) of Korean transnational-split families (KTSF) who live in Korea and the U.S. Using data collected from an online survey, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to test seven hypotheses related to the affective components of the SWB of KTSF. Income, frequency of family communication, marital satisfaction, and the size of leisure repertoire were significantly associated with the positive affect of KTSF. The amount of leisure time and the frequency of leisure involvement were not significant. Two regression models were tested to understand the differential validity of the time and frequency of six different types of leisure activities on positive affect. The leisure time and frequency of Hobbies and Other Activities were significant, while other activity types were not. These findings were discussed in light of the existing SWB and transnationalism literature, the qualitative aspects of leisure experience, and the life circumstances of KTSF.

Keywords Korean transnational-split family · Kirogi family · Transnationalism · Subjective well-being

Transnational-split family is a family unit whose members reside in at least two different countries. It is a global phenomenon and an emerging family structure that has been propelled by advanced transportation and communication technologies, economic inequality between different regions of the world, and changes in immigration and labor laws (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Huang and Yeoh 2005; Ryan 2010; Zentgraf and Chinchilla 2012). Korean transnational-split families (KTSF) have emerged in the 1990s. A unique characteristic of KTSF is that the primary purpose of this family arrangement is to provide English education and international experience to children (Lee and Koo 2006). As such, fathers usually remain in Korea and support their wives and children who migrate to an English-speaking country such as the United States, Canada, New Zealand, or Australia (Finch and Kim 2012; Kobayashi and Preston 2007; Lee and Koo 2006).

Researchers have described the emergence of KTSF as a sign of the middle-class Korean citizens' strong desire for cosmopolitanism and better social mobility (Abelmann et al. 2014; Finch and Kim 2012; Lee and Johnstone 2017; Lee and Koo 2006). Globalization and the fact that English has become a common language in the global business scene have motivated many Korean middle-class parents to educate their children abroad to increase their English fluency and to help them obtain coveted positions in the highly-competitive Korean job market (Kang 2012; Kim 2010). In addition, KTSF has emerged because some parents were discontented with Korea's over-competitive and exam-oriented education system or their children struggled with such a rigid and intense educational atmosphere (Abelmann and Kang 2014).

Thus, KTSF distinguish themselves from transnational families originating from less developed areas of the world where an adult family member (either father or mother) temporarily moves to another country to earn a higher income and support their children and the rest of family members at home. KTSF are also called “*Kirogi*”(기러기) or “wild geese” because of spouses' marital fidelity, lifelong commitment to families, and traveling long distances to visit family members in another country (Finch and Kim 2012). Although the exact number of today's Kirogi family is unknown, it “has become so widespread that it is now part of mainstream middle-class Korean culture” (Finch and Kim 2012, p. 503). An article from the Washington Post stated that 10,000 Korean school-

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age children left to study overseas in 2002 (Ly 2005, January 9). Abelmann et al. (2014) mentioned that there were nearly 30,000 Korean children who lived in a foreign country for study abroad in 2006, yet the number plummeted to 18,118 in 2009 due to the global financial crisis, and then slightly increased to 18,741 in 2010. A report from the Korean Educational Development Institute mentioned that 8892 Korean students from 5 to 18 years old were studying abroad in 2017 (Korean Educational Development Institute 2018), yet this number does not include children of kindergarten-age and college students.

Due to its unique characteristics, KTSF has become an important social and political phenomenon not only in Korea but also in the global context (Abelmann et al. 2014; Finch and Kim 2012; Lee and Koo 2006). Concomitantly, KTSF has garnered much attention from Korean and international researchers so that the number of studies on KTSF has continuously grown in recent years (Jeong et al. 2014). The subjective well-being (SWB) and mental health of KTSF have been distinctive research topics in this line of inquiry (Chang 2018; Kim et al. 2014). It is believed that depression, loneliness, family discord, and weakened family ties are prevalent among the adult members of KTSF due to the family separation (Ju 2018, March 25; Onishi 2008, June 8).

However, despite the increasing number of KTSF studies, the existing scholarship suffers from a number of gaps. First, to the best of our knowledge, none of the existing studies have examined the role of leisure participation in the subjective well-being (SWB) of KTSF. It appears to be a major research gap because leisure participation significantly contributes to SWB and life satisfaction (Kuykendall et al. 2015; Newman et al. 2014) and can function as a buffer against negative life events (Kleiber et al. 2002; Kono 2015). Indeed, many immigrants strategically utilize sport and recreation activities to cope with stressful life events and adjust to the new culture of the host society (Allison and Geiger 1993; Stodolska and Alexandris 2004; Stodolska et al. 2007). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that leisure may play a particularly critical role in the well-being of KTSF. Second, previous studies have heavily relied on qualitative research methods and their findings were rather descriptive in nature. To better understand the life circumstances of KTSF, more quantitative investigations are warranted. Third, the majority of the existing studies examined primarily mothers residing in the foreign country with a few studies investigating children or fathers living in Korea (e.g., Chang 2018; Finch and Kim 2012; Jeong et al. 2014; Kang 2012; Kim et al. 2014). Thus, investigating the subjective well-being of both female and male KTSF members living in two countries is a novel area of inquiry and will deepen our understanding of the lives of KTSF.

This study attempts to address the aforementioned research gaps by investigating the leisure behavior and SWB of the

adult members of KTSF who reside in Korea and the United States. Using the bottom-up theory of well-being (Diener 1984), the study is expected to shed fresh insight into the phenomenon of KTSF. Given the increasing globalization and prevalence of transnationalism, this research has the potential to make valuable contributions to various disciplines such as positive psychology, leisure studies, and ethnic/migration studies. The following sections highlight the essence of the bottom-up theory, review factors that researchers discussed as integral to the well-being of KTSF, and develop seven hypotheses for empirical investigation.

Bottom-Up Theory of Well-Being

The bottom-up theory of SWB is one of the most popular explanations of happiness in modern psychology, and it is based on the assumption that happiness can be obtained by fulfilling universal human needs (Diener 1984). Thus, the theoretical approach postulates that individuals' overall SWB is a *summation* of positive and negative events and emotions that they experience on a moment-to-moment and daily basis (Pavot and Diener 2013; Schimmack 2008). To date, many empirical studies supported the bottom-up theory, showing that different factors such as age, gender, health, material possession, marriage, social support, and leisure are collectively accountable for happiness (Diener et al. 1999; Kuykendall et al. 2015; Pavot and Diener 2013). With this in mind, the present study posits that the SWB of KTSF is explained by various life aspects, and that leisure is one of the most critical determinants. Thus, the following section reviews previous studies on transnational families and develops seven hypotheses related to their affective components of SWB.

SWB of Parents of KTSF

Many immigrants in the host country frequently experience anxiety, stress, and social isolation, and thus they are at an increased risk of detrimental mental or psychological health outcomes (Murphy 2006). Consistently, Korean and foreign media have frequently portrayed KTSF as unhappy, suffering from loneliness, depression, family discord, and financial strain (Onishi 2008, June 8). Fathers have been described as the ones who sacrifice the most for their children's education because they are left alone in Korea and have to send remittances abroad (You and Choi 2013, May 11), yet some empirical studies noted that mothers are also at increased risk for mental health decline due to the stress of adaptation to the host country and lack of social support (Kim et al. 2014).

With regard to these concerns surrounding mental health of KTSF, researchers and previous media report agree that four factors are particularly important to understand the SWB of

KTSF and other transnational families: (1) the duration of the family separation, (2) frequent communication with family members abroad, (3) visiting the home country, and (4) marital satisfaction. For example, a commonly held view in several media reports is that *the duration of the family separation* is negatively associated with the SWB of KTSF. It means that as the family separation extends, KTSF's life satisfaction gradually decays and their family discord and social isolation are exacerbated (Ju 2018, March 25). Researchers also found that *frequent communication with family members abroad* and *visiting the home country* are closely associated with well-being of transnational families. Although living separately in two different countries can be challenging, these two activities alleviated stress and negative emotion and enhanced the life satisfaction of Caribbean immigrants in New York (Murphy and Mahalingam 2004) as well as Latin American immigrants in South Florida (Vaquera and Aranda 2011). Similarly, previous KTSF studies suggested that transnational communication with family members and traveling for family reunions are critical to maintaining family ties and alleviating feelings of isolation (Jeong et al. 2014; Lee and Koo 2006).

Marital satisfaction has been discussed as another contributor of the SWB of transnational families. As adult members of KTSF live apart from their spouse, it is not surprising that maintaining a healthy marital relationship has been one of the most widely discussed subjects in the existing scholarly literature and public discussion (Lee and Koo 2006). While Korean mass media frequently portrayed that marital dissatisfaction, divorce, and affairs are common among Kirogi families, some interviewees in previous studies were upset about those descriptions and rejected them as media sensationalism (Finch and Kim 2012; Lee and Koo 2006). Despite these conflicting stories, a consensus from previous empirical studies is that marriage is one of the most crucial determinants of SWB (Lucas et al. 2003) and maintaining high marital satisfaction is also critical to the SWB of KTSF. Indeed, a recent study on mothers of KTSF in the U.S. and New Zealand found that marital satisfaction was positively correlated with their life satisfaction (Chang 2018).

Based on the aforementioned findings about the SWB of KTSF, we developed the following four hypotheses for *both* mothers and fathers of KTSF:

Hypothesis 1: The length of living in the host country will be negatively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Hypothesis 2: The frequency of transnational family communication will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Hypothesis 3: The frequency of international travel for family reunions will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Hypothesis 4: Marital satisfaction will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Transnationalism, Leisure, and SWB

Despite the emergence of transnationalism and KTSF, virtually no studies have focused on the leisure behavior of KTSF as a central topic of investigation. The existing data show that in spite of their busy schedules comprised of household chores and childcare, many transnational mothers find time to pursue their passions and interests, socialize, and engage in leisure activities (Finch and Kim 2012). The initial separation and establishment period is usually difficult for the mothers, but leisure activities such as sports (e.g., tennis, golf), exercise, shopping, lunch dates with friends, and involvement in arts and educational pursuits bring a sense of freedom to their lives (Chiang 2008; Waters 2002, 2003). Little is known about the leisure behaviors of Kirogi fathers who remain in Korea. Research indicates that some Kirogi fathers complain about the difficulties of living alone, loneliness, and inconvenience of doing household chores by themselves (Lee and Koo 2006). Socializing with co-workers in the evening hours helps to decrease loneliness, however weekends and holidays remind them of the family separation.

To date, only a few studies have specifically focused on the leisure behavior of transnational migrants. Stodolska and Santos (2006) conducted one of the first studies on the relationship between transnationalism and leisure. They found that Mexican transnational migrant workers' leisure was conditioned by their unique life circumstances. For example, family separation was the most salient leisure constraint and many interviewees felt guilty for not being able to spend time with their family members in the home country. Moreover, since their main concern was to earn as much money as possible while they reside in the U.S., they had limited free time and their leisure activities focused on recuperation after physically demanding jobs. Their status as undocumented immigrants and fear of being deported to Mexico also exerted considerable constraints to leisure.

Li and Stodolska (2006) investigated the leisure behavior of Chinese graduate students (considered transnational migrants) in the Midwest. The temporary adaptation to the U.S. and the pressure for academic success were the two most critical issues in the interviewees' lives and leisure participation. Since the students prioritized study and work, they had limited leisure time, much of which was often unplanned, sandwiched between work and study obligations, solitary, and focusing on relaxation. The students also experienced a lack of recreational opportunities that suit their tastes as well as lack of leisure partners from their own ethnic group. Thus, Chinese graduate students seemed to sacrifice leisure and

quality of life with a hope for a better life after return to the home country.

Huang et al. (2015) examined transnational leisure experiences of second-generation Chinese-American immigrants. The authors found that their interviewees enjoyed both traditional and contemporary forms of transnational leisure. The traditional forms included attending ethnic events, festivals, social clubs, and organizations while the contemporary activities included enjoying ethnic media, pop culture, and Internet-based activities. Huang et al. (2015) observed that traditional leisure activities were more region-specific and occurred in group settings while contemporary leisure activities tended to be individualistic and pan-ethnic in nature.

Notwithstanding the contribution of the previous studies on transnational leisure, limited studies have examined the role of leisure participation in KTSF's well-being. The paucity of research is surprising since studies have consistently shown that leisure can help individuals cope with negative life events by providing distractions, building optimism for the future, and offering social support and opportunities for self-restoration and positive inner change (Kleiber et al. 2002; Kono 2015). In addition, studies have shown that sport and recreation help immigrants cope with stressful life events and learn the culture of the host society (Allison and Geiger 1993; Stodolska and Alexandris 2004; Stodolska et al. 2007). A meta-analysis of past leisure studies also showed that leisure participation was positively associated with SWB, while the strength of the association varied by the quantity, frequency, and diversity of leisure (Kuykendall et al. 2015). These previous findings suggest that leisure participation of KTSF can play a particularly important role in their SWB. In particular, specifying the effects of the amount of time spent on leisure, frequency of involvement in leisure activities, and the size of the leisure repertoire (the number of distinct leisure activities they are involved in) will provide more detailed information about the relationship (Lee et al. 2019). Thus, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 5: The amount of leisure time will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Hypothesis 6: The frequency of leisure participation will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

Hypothesis 7: The size of the leisure repertoire will be positively associated with the positive affect of the parents of KTSF.

The present study aims to investigate the aforementioned seven hypotheses with KTSF parents who reside in Korea and

the United States. The study is expected to provide a more nuanced understanding of the lives of KTSF than the previous research has offered and yield meaningful implications for the policies and well-being of transnational-split families.

Methods

Data Collection

Data were collected from adult members of KTSF who lived separately from their spouse in Korea and the U.S. We employed various strategies to recruit the potential survey respondents. From May to December 2018, we contacted 51 online communities of KTSF and 165 Korean organizations in the U.S. The Korean organizations included 30 regional Korean associations and 57 Korean churches in the major U.S. cities, as well as 78 Korean student associations in different universities across the U.S. We contacted those 215 organizations, explained the purpose of the study, and requested a permission to distribute surveys to their members. Eventually, 8 online communities of KTSF, 10 Korean associations, 19 Korean student organizations, and 6 Korean churches either granted the permission to post an online survey on their website or distributed the online survey among the organizations' members. We also reached out to our personal and professional networks to recruit additional participants.

The online survey consisted of 24 questions about leisure participation patterns, characteristics of transnational family arrangements, frequency and type of transnational contacts among family members, marital satisfaction, affective components of subjective well-being, and demographic information. At the beginning of the survey, screening questions were asked to exclude respondents who did not meet the sampling criteria (e.g., "Do you currently live separately from your spouse and consider yourself a Kirogi family?" and "Do you currently live either in Korea or the U.S.?). A total of 326 individuals responded to the survey. Among those respondents, 110 cases were discarded due to incomplete responses and missing data, which yielded 221 usable responses. Subsequently, we excluded 52 respondents who did not have a child to make the sample characteristics consistent with the definition of a Kirogi family. The remainder of the 169 responses were analyzed in the present study. Our sample consisted of both fathers and mothers of KTSF, yet they were not matched by the family.

Measures

Age, gender, education, and family income were used to gauge respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. Age was a continuous variable. Gender was dummy-coded

(female = 0 and male = 1). Education was measured with an ordinal scale (elementary school = 1, middle school = 2, high school = 3, community college = 4, some university education = 5, Bachelor's degree = 6, graduate degree = 7). Family income ranged from "Less than 500 thousand Korean Won" = (1) to "More than 10000 thousand Korean Won" = (21) with 500 thousand Korean Won interval.

To understand KTSF's transnational life, the length of family separation (years), the frequency of transnational family communication, the frequency of international travel for family reunions, and marriage satisfaction were measured. The family communication variable was assessed using five questions. Each question asked the average number of family communications per week using telephone, email, Skype or other visual communication tools, messenger or text applications, and letters, respectively. The average score of communication frequency was calculated by dividing the total number of communications by the number of methods used. The frequency of international travel was measured using an ordinal scale (Less than once per year = 1, once per year = 2, twice per year = 3, three times per year = 4, four times per year = 5, five times per year or more = 6).

Marital satisfaction was measured by the four items used by Orthner (1975). Those four items were "In general, how often do you think things between you and your spouse are going well?", "Have you ever considered separation from your mate?", "Everything considered, how happy has your marriage been for you?", and "If you had your life to live over, do you think you would marry the same person?" All four items used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" = (1) to "All the Time" = (5). A standardized marriage satisfaction score was obtained by combining the response scores.

Respondents' leisure participation patterns were measured using a modified version of Ragheb's (1980) leisure participation involvement scale. First, a question provided a list of 55 leisure activities categorized into six different activity types (Appendix 1) and asked respondents to select all the activities that they participated in the past 12 months. Respondents' leisure repertoire, which is the library of leisure activities that people participate in or perceive to be available (Iso-Ahola 1980), was calculated by combining the number of the selected leisure activities. Second, to measure the amount of time spent on leisure, respondents were asked to answer how many hours per week they participated in each of the selected activities. Leisure frequency was measured by asking how many times per week the respondents participated in each of the selected activities. An aggregated score of the amount of leisure time was calculated by dividing the combined hours of all participated leisure activities by the number of participated activities. An aggregated leisure frequency score was calculated using the same method.

The SWB of respondents was estimated using the affect-balance score calculated from the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener et al. 2010). The SPANE is a 12-item questionnaire which uses a five point Likert-type scale ranging from "Very Rarely or Never" = (1) to "Very Often or Always" = (5) to assess the frequency of experiencing six positive feelings (positive, good, pleasant, happy, joyful, and contented) and six negative feelings (negative, bad, unpleasant, sad, afraid, and angry) during the last four weeks. A combined positive affect (PA) score was used as a measure of SWB. The score ranged from 5 to 30.

Analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations between the selected variables were examined. Using the PA score as a dependent variable, a three-step hierarchical regression was performed to analyze the incremental predictive power of (1) demographic characteristics: age, gender, education, and income, (2) factors related to transnational life: length of family separation, frequency of transnational family communications, frequency of international travel, and marital satisfaction, and (3) leisure variables: the amount of leisure time, frequency of leisure participation, and leisure repertoire. In addition, two OLS regression models were tested to examine how hours and frequency of different leisure activities vary by the relationship with SWB.

Results

Sample Characteristics and Hypothesis Testing

The data reported in Table 1 summarize the characteristics of the sample. Most respondents were female ($n = 119$, 70.4%),

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of variables

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Age	20	58	41.22	7.51
Gender	0	1	.31	.47
Education	0	7	6.02	1.13
Family income	3	21	14.44	5.02
Family separation	0	19	3.71	3.70
Family communication	4	43	21.62	7.87
International travel	1	6	2.18	1.24
Marital satisfaction	5	20	15.75	3.43
Leisure Time	0	44	8.59	5.62
Leisure frequency	0	25	10.96	5.35
Leisure repertoire	0	30	7.26	6.57
Positive affect	7	30	20.22	5.01

middle-aged ($M = 41.22$, $SD = 7.51$), and had a college or graduate degree ($n = 140$, 82.8%). Almost all (92.4% or 110 out of 119) of female respondents resided in the U.S. while 72.7% (36 out of 50) of male respondents resided in Korea. The average family income was 14.44 ($SD = 5.02$) which is approximately 7250 thousand Korean Won (approximately 70,000 USD). The family separation ranged from less than one year to 19 years ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 3.70$) while the average number of family communications per week ranged from 4 times to 43 times ($M = 21.62$, $SD = 7.87$). On average, respondents traveled to another country once a year to see their family members ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 1.24$). The respondents' average score on marital satisfaction ($M = 15.75$, $SD = 6.57$) and PA ($M = 20.22$, $SD = 5.01$) suggested that most of them were content with their marriage and life in general. On average, respondents engaged in leisure activities for 8.59 h per week ($SD = 5.62$) and participated in leisure activities 10.96 times per week ($SD = 5.35$). The average leisure repertoire score was 7.26 ($SD = 6.57$), indicating that each respondent participated in more than seven distinct leisure pursuits.

Descriptive statistics of the leisure time and frequency of participation in six types of leisure activities were summarized in Table 2. The mean scores of both leisure time (in hours) and frequency suggested that Home-based recreation ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 3.33$; $M = 5.38$, $SD = 4.40$) and Electronic media activities ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 2.83$; $M = 5.35$, $SD = 5.35$) were the two most popular leisure activities among the parents of KTSF. This information indicates that their leisure was centered around sedentary activities at home or indoors rather than physical or outdoor activities.

Table 3 shows the results of correlation estimation of the study variables. The PA score was negatively correlated with

gender ($r = -.29$, $p < .01$), meaning that men had lower PA scores than women, yet positively correlated with family income ($r = .27$, $p < .01$), family communication ($r = .20$, $p < .05$), marital satisfaction ($r = .16$, $p < .05$), and leisure repertoire ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). The correlation coefficients of statistically significant relationships ranged from $-.29$ to $.64$.

Table 4 presents the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. The F statistics showed that all regression models were statistically significant. The Durbin-Watson statistics were between 1.66 and 1.84, suggesting no autocorrelation in the sample. In Step 1, the four demographic variables explained 12% of the variance in PA: $F(4, 164) = 6.74$, $p < .001$. Gender ($\beta = -.23$, $p < .01$) and family income ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$) were significant predictors of PA. The other demographic variables were not statistically significant.

In Step 2, four variables that are deemed to be particularly important for the SBW of KTSF were added into the regression equation. The model explained 19% of the variance in PA: F change (4, 160) = 4.33, $p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 change from Step 1 to Step 2 was 7%. Gender ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$), family income ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$), family communication ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$), and marital satisfaction ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$) were statistically significant. The other variables were not significant.

In Step 3, leisure repertoire, leisure time, and leisure frequency were added into the regression equation. The model explained 29% of the variance in PA: F change (3, 157) = 8.533, $p < .001$. The adjusted R^2 change from Step 2 to Step 3 was 10%. Age ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .05$) and family income ($\beta = .28$, $p < .001$) were significant. Consistent with Step 2, family communication ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$) and marital satisfaction ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) were significant. Leisure repertoire ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$) was significant while leisure time and frequency were not. The other variables were not significant.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the quantity and frequency of six leisure types

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Leisure time				
Home-based recreation	0	20	3.57	3.33
Electronic media	0	13.33	2.71	2.83
Exercise-oriented activities	0	5.40	.48	.81
Outdoor recreational activities	0	7.25	.47	.83
Team sports	0	4.22	.05	.34
Hobbies and other activities	0	7.47	1.01	1.42
Leisure frequency				
Home-based recreation	0	21.5	5.38	4.40
Electronic media	0	20.83	5.35	5.35
Exercise-oriented activities	0	6.30	.56	.94
Outdoor recreational activities	0	4.90	.34	.59
Team sports	0	1.67	.03	.16
Hobbies and other activities	0	5.71	.77	1.17

Differential Validity of Different Leisure Activities

Another regression model was tested to examine how six leisure types differently affect PA. The model used leisure time and frequency of participation in six activity types while the rest of the independent variables and dependent variable remained the same. The results showed that the variance inflation factor of leisure time and leisure frequency of the six types of leisure activities ranged from 3.96 to 10.31, indicating the presence of serious multicollinearities (Bowerman and O'Connell 1990). Thus, the effect of leisure time and leisure frequency among six types of leisure activities were examined separately by testing two regression models. Model 1 in Table 5 summarizes the results of the regression model with the leisure time spent on six activity types. Gender ($\beta = -.15$, $SE = .84$, $p < .05$), family income ($\beta = .27$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), family communication ($\beta = .24$, $SE = .42$, $p < .01$), and marital satisfaction ($\beta = .12$, $SE = .11$, $p < .05$) were significantly

Table 3 Correlations of variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age											
2. Gender	.12										
3. Education	.16*	.15									
4. Family income	.16*	-.14	.16*								
5. Family separation	.36***	-.04	.04	.18*							
6. Family communication	.03	-.03	.02	-.07	-.09						
7. International travel	-.08	.15	-.09	.25**	.12	-.10					
8. Marital satisfaction	-.09	-.04	.13	.07	-.10	.13	.11				
9. Leisure time	.02	.04	.14	.08	-.19*	.17*	-.04	.23**			
10. Leisure frequency	.04	.01	.24**	.07	-.12	.16*	-.01	.11	.64***		
11. Leisure repertoire	.39***	-.10	.11	.05	.27***	.06	-.13	.04	-.17*	-.11	
12. Positive affect	-.05	-.29**	-.04	.27**	.10	.20*	-.02	.16*	.02	.04	.31**

N = 154. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

associated with PA. Among the leisure variables, leisure repertoire ($\beta = .14$, $SE = .12$, $p < .05$) and Hobbies and Other Activities ($\beta = .27$, $SE = .47$, $p < .05$) were significant while none of the other leisure time variables were significant. The model explained 27% of the variance in PA. Model 2 in Table 5 summarizes the results of the regression model with the frequency of participation in six leisure activity types. Similar to Model 1, gender ($\beta = -.16$, $SE = .82$, $p < .05$), family income ($\beta = .24$, $SE = .08$, $p < .01$), family communication ($\beta = .21$, $SE = .43$, $p < .01$), and marital satisfaction ($\beta = .16$, $SE = .16$, $p < .05$) were significantly associated with PA.

Leisure repertoire ($\beta = .36$, $SE = .14$, $p < .05$) and Hobbies and Other Activities ($\beta = .21$, $SE = .58$, $p < .05$) were also significant. The model explained 28% of the variance in PA.

In sum, family communication, marital satisfaction, and leisure repertoire were consistently significant in all regression models, supporting Hypotheses 2, 4, and 7, respectively. Family separation and international travel were not significant in any models, thus Hypotheses 1 and 3 were not supported.

Table 4 Hierarchical multiple regression estimates of subjective well-being's standardized beta

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Age	-.05	-.05	-.20*
Gender	-.23**	-.18*	-.13
Education	-.04	-.04	-.08
Family income	.26**	.27**	.28***
Family separation		.12	.09
Family communication		.24**	.23**
International travel		-.14	-.10
Marital satisfaction		.19**	.15*
Leisure repertoire			.38***
Leisure time			.04
Leisure frequency			.08
F statistic	6.74*	5.81***	7.15***
Adjusted R ²	.12	.19	.29
Adjusted R ² change	–	.07	.10
Durbin-Watson	1.66	1.82	1.84

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001

Table 5 Regression estimates of subjective well-being

	Model 1 Leisure time	Model 2 Leisure frequency
Age	-.15 (.06)	-.11 (.06)
Gender	-.15* (.84)	-.16* (.82)
Education	-.07 (.35)	-.02 (.35)
Family income	.27** (.08)	.24** (.08)
Family separation	.08 (.11)	.04 (.11)
Family communication	.24** (.42)	.21** (.43)
International travel	-.09 (.33)	-.07 (.33)
Marital satisfaction	.12* (.11)	.16* (.11)
Leisure repertoire	.14* (.12)	.36* (.14)
Home-based recreation	-.00 (.13)	.09 (.11)
Electronic media	.06 (.17)	-.12 (.11)
Exercise-oriented activities	.04 (.64)	-.13 (.59)
Outdoor recreational activities	-.13 (.67)	-.19 (.91)
Team sports	-.04 (1.45)	.07 (2.75)
Hobbies and other activities	.27* (.47)	.21* (.58)
F statistic	5.19***	5.44***
Adjusted R ²	.27	.28
Durbin-Watson	1.76	1.77

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001

Hypotheses 5 and 6 were partially supported because only the leisure time and frequency of participation in Hobbies and Other Activities were significant.

Discussion

Despite the prevalence of KTSF in contemporary society, researchers have paid limited attention to their leisure behavior and SWB. The present study offers several unique findings that were not reported by previous studies on transnationalism and SWB. First, the study findings generally supported the bottom-up theory of well-being. The addition of three different sets of variables in the hierarchical regression model additively accounted for more variance in PA, showing that the effect size of the model increased from 12% in Step 1 to 29% in Step 3. Thus, the satisfaction of different life domains collectively contributed to the positive affect of KTSF. The bottom-up theory provides a robust explanation for the life satisfaction of KTSF even though they have a unique family arrangement in which married couples live separately in different countries.

Another distinctive finding of the study was that leisure played a critical role in the SWB of KTSF. The adjusted R^2 change from Step 2 to Step 3 showed that the addition of the three leisure variables increased the regression model's effect size from 19% to 29%. Given that the adjusted R^2 change from Step 1 to Step 2 was 7%, those leisure variables accounted for more variance in PA than did the four variables in Step 2 that previous studies mentioned as important predictors of the well-being of transnational families. These findings were consistent with previous findings with the non-transnational population that leisure participation is positively associated with SWB (Brajša-Žganec et al. 2011; Iwasaki 2007; Lee and Hwang 2018; Newman et al. 2014; Walker and Kono 2018; Wang and Wong 2014). They also suggest that future studies should consider leisure as a critical determinant of the well-being of KTSF and other transnational families.

Moreover, leisure repertoire consistently showed a significant positive association with PA across different regression models, supporting Hypothesis 7. This finding echoes previous studies on non-transnational families that people with greater leisure repertoire tend to report higher SWB or life satisfaction (Kim and Kim 2009; Lee et al. 2016, 2019; Loy et al. 2003). Since leisure repertoire entails knowledge, experience, and skills in different leisure activities, it reflects the amount of cultural capital that can be utilized to enrich cultural and social lives (Guinn 1995; Stalker 2011). Moreover, greater leisure repertoire can be liberating and prevent leisure boredom which negatively impacts life satisfaction as it allows individuals to easily substitute the current leisure activity if it is no longer enjoyable and satisfying (Granzin and Haggard 2000; Iso-Ahola and Weissinger 1987). In addition, the size of

the leisure repertoire may be also indicative of the level of adaptation to the host society and migrants' ability to take advantage of various leisure opportunities provided by their local community.

Unlike leisure repertoire, we found that both the amount of time spent on leisure participation and frequency of leisure participation did not exert a statistically significant impact on PA in Step 3. However, when differential validity was examined, both Model 1 and 2, respectively, showed that the amount of time and frequency of participation in Hobbies and Other Activities were significantly associated with PA while other types of leisure activities were not. The significance of Hobbies and Other Activities might be explained by the unique characteristic of this activity type. For example, as illustrated in Appendix 1, this activity type included socializing with family and friends as two distinctive leisure activities. Researchers have noted that social connection is one of the most important gateways to happiness for transnational families and for the general public (Haagsman et al. 2015; Seppala et al. 2013), and the social relationship established through leisure can alleviate loneliness and buffer the stress from immigration and negative life events (Glover 2018; Stodolska 2007). Hence, the statistical significance of Hobbies and Other Activities might stem from its particular emphasis on the socialization-aspect of leisure.

We also found that Hypotheses 1 and 3 were not supported, meaning that the length of family separation and the frequency of international travel for family reunions were not significantly associated with SWB of KTSF. These findings are inconsistent with previous studies on transnational families in European and North American countries (Mazzucato et al. 2017; Vaquera and Aranda 2011). The findings can be interpreted in two ways. First, while the study sample is limited to KTSF, the insignificance of the length of family separation and the frequency of international travel supports recent research that questions a common belief that family members have to live together in order to maintain a happy life. In particular, the model of Living Apart Together partnership (LAT), where a couple involved in an intimate relationship resides in separate households, is increasing in popularity (Benson and Coleman 2016; Funk and Kobayashi 2016; Lusinski 2019, December 1). Our findings also suggest that living separately from a spouse might not necessarily be a prerequisite of well-being for transnational families. Second, the lack of significance of these two variables suggests that other factors not included in the present study could be more crucial in the positive affect of KTSF. This explanation is also convincing since the effect size of Step 3 suggested that 70% of the variance in PA was not explained by the independent variables included in the model. Thus, further investigation of these topics is needed to provide a more definitive answer to the effect of the two variables on the affective balance of transnational families.

Family income and marital satisfaction were significant across all models in this study. As Lee and Koo (2006) argued, “*kirogi* arrangement is not some natural outcome of the overflowing affluence of upper- or upper-middle class families. The families stretched their economic capacity as much as they could to sustain themselves” (pp. 548–549), with fathers sending \$3000–5000 per month to their families in the U.S. The importance of income in the SWB of transnational families has been also documented in the well-being literature (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2002) and previous transnational studies on African transnational families in Europe (Dito et al. 2016; Haagsman et al. 2015; Mazzucato et al. 2017; Vaquera and Aranda 2011). Thus, the finding makes sense since a higher income reduces the stress associated with living on a tight budget and can promote access to various amenities and resources. For example, higher income allows entrance to housing in a good school district which is especially important for many KTSF because providing good education to child(ren) is usually their primary motivation for living separately in two countries.

Finally, marital satisfaction was positively associated with SWB. Researchers found that marriage is an important predictor of happiness and SWB of non-transnational population (Lucas et al. 2003), and it is also positively associated with the SWB of mothers of KTSF (Chang 2018). Lee and Koo (2006) confirmed that most of the *Kirogi* couples in their study had very high marital satisfaction, some described their relationships as “closer than before” (p. 549) and were pleased by the regular contact they maintained with their wives and children. Similarly, *Kirogi* mothers interviewed in Finch and Kim’s (2012) study claimed that they trusted their husbands and that their relationships with their spouses were strengthened by family separation. Our findings echoed these previous studies and suggested that marital satisfaction is crucial for SWB of both fathers and mothers of KTSF.

We advise cautious interpretations of our findings with consideration of three limitations. First, this study used cross-sectional data collected from KTSF who lived in Korea and the U.S. While the U.S. is the most popular destination for KTSF, other English-speaking countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the Philippines have not been included in the sample. Since the cultural context and life circumstances of KTSF in different countries are likely to differ, caution needs to be exercised in generalizing our findings. Second, as we mentioned earlier, the effect of leisure on SWB might be better understood by taking into account both qualitative and quantitative aspects of leisure experience. Finally, this study did not include data related to children. While children have not been the primary focus of our study, their relationship with parents, academic performance, and adjustment to the host country could impact the SWB of parents given that the central focus of *Kirogi* arrangement is usually children’s education and their future.

Regrettably, we did not collect this information in the present study.

Each of these limitations is linked to suggestions for future studies. For instance, we encourage researchers to collect data from KTSF residing in other countries and take into account the quality of leisure experience and the circumstance of children to gain a more complete picture of KTSF. Longitudinal and mixed method research would also illuminate how KTSF’s leisure and SWB evolve over time as well as provide more detailed information about the relationship between leisure and SWB of transnational family.

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Appendix

1. Home-Based Recreation
 - 1) Watching TV
 - 2) Readings books/magazines
 - 3) Listening to music
 - 4) Playing board or table games
2. Electronic Media
 - 5) Surfing websites for leisure
 - 6) Playing computer or video games
 - 7) Social networking (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, tweeting)
 - 8) Emailing
 - 9) Texting
3. Exercise-Oriented Activities
 - 10) Badminton
 - 11) Bicycling
 - 12) Body building
 - 13) Aerobics/dance/ballet
 - 14) Gymnastics
 - 15) Jogging/running
 - 16) Martial arts
 - 17) Swimming
 - 18) Tennis
 - 19) Yoga
4. Outdoor Recreational Activities
 - 20) Walking for pleasure
 - 21) Picnicking/BBQing
 - 22) Camping
 - 23) Canoeing/kayaking
 - 24) Skiing

- 25) Fishing
- 26) Golf
- 27) Hiking
- 28) Horseback riding/racing
- 29) Hunting/shooting
 5. Team Sports
- 30) Baseball
- 31) Basketball
- 32) Football/rugby
- 33) Lacrosse
- 34) Soccer
- 35) Softball
- 36) Table tennis
- 37) Wrestling
- 38) Volleyball
 6. Hobbies and Other Activities
- 39) Socializing with family
- 40) Socializing with friends
- 41) Dining out/drinking
- 42) Going to movies
- 43) Visiting museums/art exhibitions
- 44) Cooking
- 45) Gardening/farming
- 46) Collecting
- 47) Gambling
- 48) Going to concerts/plays/operas
- 49) Travel/vacations
- 50) Karaoke
- 51) Calligraphy
- 52) Playing musical instruments
- 53) Handicrafts
- 54) Photography
- 55) Volunteer organizations/meetings

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