Abstract

This study was designed to identify the perception towards social minorities and the variables which influence such perception for 230 preliminary police trainees of the Central Police Academy. The data were collected through the survey questionnaires and a multiple regression analysis was performed to conduct frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, and learn about the sense of social distance. The analytical results are as follows.

First, the average value of the sense of social distance towards North Korean refugees perceived by police trainees is 5.10 or higher, whose hierarchical priority is not clear, yet the questionnaires of whether they are accepted as members of the family showed a relatively low average value(4.30).

Second, reviewing the final multiple regression analytical results by entering negative stereotypes and negative feelings, it was shown that negative feelings(β= -9.887 p < .001) have a significant influence on the sense of social distance of North Korean refugees of the police trainees. This indicates that the higher the negative feelings, the higher the sense of the social distance towards the North Korean refugees, which results in the difficulty of accepting them and the greater sense of social distance. This study is meaningful because it presented the relationship between the sense of social distance and the influential variables towards the North Korean refugees for the police trainees who will become the preliminary police officers. Notwithstanding the results of this study, there are limitations on the number of samples, sample selection method, and cross-sectional study.

[Keywords] North Korean Refugees, Police Trainees, Sense of Social Distance, Negative Feeling, Negative Stereotype

1. Introduction

As of September 2018, there are 32,147 North Korean refugees conducting daily activities in Korea (Ministry of Unification, 2018). Since the multi-cultural phenomenon in Korea emerged, North Korean refugees have been perceived as social minorities or specific groups, and the state is actively formulating and providing policies and supports.

Some self-governing bodies and police have established a collaborative system to help protect North Korean refugees in the corresponding region and are making efforts and implementing projects to enable social adaptation and stabilize settlement. As such, various settlement programs for North Korean refugees, education, employment, housing, and other various state supports have been extended, and the society has turned into one which respects diversity.

However, it was discovered that the suffering caused by prejudice against these refugees is even more difficult for everyday lives than the those experienced by refugees due to economic and cultural differences. Such a variety of inferiorities make North Korean refugees vulnerable
to crimes, thereby causing them to become victims of all types of fraud, identity theft, and unpaid wages, or even make them criminals.

In recent years, larger expectations for unification in the Korean society have emerged, and if one expects North Korean refugees to act as a member of the local community beyond mere coexistence, a thorough preparation will be required.

In this regard, the role of police officers who protect and keep them safe is very important. In particular, the issue of how the preliminary police trainees perceive the North Korean refugees is very important.

The North Korean refugees responded that they are dissatisfied with their lives in South Korea because they live away from the families as the first reason, and because of the discrimination and prejudice of the South Korean society as the second reason. In reality, excluding the separation from family, discrimination and prejudice may be said to be the most difficult factor.

Such discrimination and prejudice are not only caused by the ordinary citizens and social life but also by laws and systems. In particular, police officers often make face-to-face contact with the refugees due to incidents, accidents, protection and support. Accordingly, what is very important for the police officers is how they treat and perceive the refugees and the state of their mind when handling their affairs. In particular, the police officers’ prejudice, discriminatory attitude, and how they handle the affairs of the North Korean refugees, who are recognized as the socially weak and minority, will cause various negative consequences.

Furthermore, it is very important how the preliminary police trainees, who will be responsible for law enforcement in the future, perceive the subjects of North Korean refugees.

Accordingly, this study investigates into the preliminary police officers’ perception towards North Korean refugees through the concept of the sense of social distance, and explores the factors influencing them.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Concept of North Korean refugees

According to the definition of Article 2 of the North Korean Refugees Protection and Settlement Support Act, North Korean refugees are those who have addresses, immediate family members, spouses, and workplaces located in the north of the military demarcation (North Korea), and those who have not acquired foreign nationalities after departing from North Korea. In addition, according to the scope of application of Article 3 of the same Act, it can be understood that the North Korean refugees who indicated their intention to be protected by the Republic of Korea are included.

However, the North Korean refugees are different from the concept of multi-cultural families as they are distinguished from foreigners residing in Korea, married immigrants and naturalized individuals supported pursuant to the Framework Act on the Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea.

In addition, the concept of the North Korean refugee does not apply to the Chinese residing in North Korean holding Chinese nationality, North Koreans residing in China holding the North Korean nationality, and the children of the North Korean refugees who were born in third countries and who also had no facts of residing in North Korea after being born in third countries such as China as the children of North Korean residents.

According to Article 22 of the Enforcement Decree of the North Korean Refugees Protection and Settlement Support Act, the Minister of Unification may resolve issues of obstacles to living on one’s own after being transferred from settlement support facilities to his or her place of residence, and may also provide protection necessary for gaining independence and ensuring settlement. Consequently, the North Korean refugees undergo social adaptation training for a certain period of time at Hanawon, which belongs to the Ministry of Unification, and receive personal protection from the security police.

2.2. Circumstances and status of North Korean refugees
According to the Ministry of Unification, as of September 2018, there are a total of 32,147 North Korean refugees, of which 23,043 are women and 9,104 are men, where the ratio of women turned out to be a high of 72%, respectively. As such, approximately 7 out of 10 North Korean refugees are women, 75.9% of who are living in South Korea for 5 years or longer (Settlement Status Investigation on North Korean Refugees in 2017). Accordingly, the second Hanawon was launched in 2012 to strengthen the facilities and training programs for women to help provide psychological stability and various support policies.

In addition, the status of economic activities of the North Korean refugees increased by 3.3% to 61.2% year on year, while the rate of employment increased by 1.9% to 56.9% year on year, yet is still low. To this end, various national policies such as employment support, educational support, social security support, residential protection and housing support systems are implemented, among various state policies, as well as the initial settlement payment system through which a certain amount is paid to everyone to help maintain basic livelihood in the early stage of their social life (Ministry of Unification, 2018, Handbook on the Affairs of Settlement Support for the North Korean Refugees).

2.3. Sense of social distance

2.3.1. Concept of the sense of social distance

The sense of social distance is a concept presented based on the assumption that it can be understood and measured as a psychological distance for an individual’s perception towards the counterpart by measuring and quantifying physical space or distance generally speaking.

This scale has long been known as a proven tool of measurement across many areas of social science. Primarily, it has been used to measure prejudice against social minority groups or the weak (Wark and Galliher, 2007). Accordingly, just as many people express ‘close’ or ‘far’ in terms of expressing their interpersonal relationship, the sense of social distance means the level of intimacy and understanding from the perspective of the relationship (Bogardus, 1925). Accordingly, Bogardus' Social Distance Scale (Bogardus, 1925; Bogardus, 1933) was used to identify and learn bout the sense of social distance the police trainees perceive towards the North Korean refugees. [1][2][3]

Reviewing the previous studies, the sense of social distance has been used for the purposes of objective quantification as an important tool of measurement in identifying relationships among groups or in studies dealing with issues of racial or ethnic conflicts (Laumann, 1965). Most representatively, Bogardus’ Social Distance Scale was used primarily to measure the extent of discrimination and prejudice against minority races in the United States (Parrillo and Donoghue, 2005)[4][5].

2.3.2. Sense of social distance towards North Korean refugees

As the interest in the multi-cultural phenomenon has grown in Korea, studies on foreigners and minority groups residing in the Korean society have also become more active than ever. Among them, the studies on the perception towards North Korean refugees and the sense of social distance are conducted against various groups.

In Tae-Jeong’s (2009) study, college and university students were investigated on their sense of social distance towards races and their attitude towards cultural diversity against such as the new settlers, Chinese of Korean descent, Chinese, and Americans, among others. As a result of the study, the average score of the new settlers turned out to the highest, indicating that they had the lowest sense of social distance relative to the other groups including the Chinese of Korean descent, Chinese and Southeast Asians. As such, ordinary citizens and college and university students perceived the refugees as being more favorable than Chinese, Chinese of Korean descent, or other groups because they are the of the same nation, yet the sense of social distance, when compared against South Koreans, is perceived to be larger (Lee Soo-Jeong, Yang Gye-Min, 2013)[6][7].

Hwang Jeong-Mi et al. (2017) has demonstrated that there is a significant influence on the perception of threat in the sense of social distance felt towards the North Korean refugees by the age group of 19 to 29 in Korea[8].
According to Park Jeong-Seo (2015), as a result of measuring the sense of social distance towards various groups, the Americans were the most favorable group, followed by the Chines of Korean descent, North Korean refugees, and the children of multi-cultural families [9].

2.3.3. Factors influencing the sense of social distance

The sense of social distance is reported to yield different results depending on demographic characteristics. In particular, education and human rights movements are identified as the factors that reduce the sense of social distance (Parrillo and Donoghue, 2005).

It was found that as for the gender difference, the female adolescents felt less sense of social distance towards foreigners or the multi-cultural groups than the male adolescents, and they were more receptive to other cultures (Kim Hee-Ja, 2008; Lee Ja-Hyeong, Kim Kyeong-Keun, 2013; Jung Jin-Hwan, Lee Chang-Shik, 2011). In addition, a study on the sense of social distance targeting South Korean residents also demonstrated that males are more receptive towards the North Korean refugees and felt less sense of social distance than the females (Lee Soo-Jeong) [10].

Reviewing the relationship between income and the sense of social distance, it turned out that the higher the income level, the closer the sense of social distance to the North Korean refugees (Min Ji-Seon, Kim Doo-Seop, 2013) [11].

Another important demographic variable influencing the sense of social distance is religion. It was reported that the people having religion feel less sense of social distance to minority groups and have a more receptive attitude towards others than those who do not (Kang Ke-Yeong, Jang Yoo-Mi, 2013; Jo Hak-Rae, 2014; Triandis and Triandis, 1960) [12].

If the identity is high, it turned out that the fellowship towards the group of association increased and the sense of social distance towards other groups became far, so the level of acceptance towards them was low (Kim and Chung, 2015).

As such, two opposing results for the North Korean refugees may be had. First, as for the South Korean residents who are highly proud of their citizenship, they have a view that the fellowship and acceptance towards the North Korean refugees are higher as they are influenced by the idea that they are of the same people (Park Jong-Cheol et al., 2015) [13]. On the other hand, there is also a view that, while they are the same people, since they have lived long as citizens of different countries and hence have different cultural identities, feelings of exclusion against the North Korean refugees may be had for those having high identity as the citizens of South Korea (Park Jeong-Seo, 2015; Kim and Chung, 2015).

2.4. Previous studies

As for the studies related to the North Korean refugees and police activities, Kim Yoon-Yeong (2007) studied the rate of criminal victim and damages of the North Korean refugees. As a result of examining the rate of criminal victim and damage reported to the police, the number of the refugees who entered South Korea from 1998 until January 31, 2007 was 8,885, 19% (1,687 people) of whom were convicted for crimes including traffic violations, and 10.1% (899 people) committed violent crimes such as homicide, rape, and assault and battery (Kim Yoon-Yeong, 2007). While the North Korean refugees use the same language as ours, they must be seen as being vulnerable to the occurrence of crimes and victims of crimes due to the legal systems and cultures that are different from North Korea society.

North Korean refugees indicated the prejudice and discrimination by residents to be their difficulties experienced in the local community (Park Young-Hee, 2008). Domestic studies on the sense of social distance were primarily conducted on the disabled people and disabled children, North Korean refugees, multi-cultural families and children, foreign workers, Chinese of Korean descent, and homosexuals. And measurements were taken on the perception of the sense of social distance towards relatively diverse groups such as ordinary citizens, youth and college and university students, nurses, physiotherapists, and teachers, among others.

According to Yoo In-Jin and Song Young-Ho (2011), citizens of the Republic of Korea think of the North Korean refugees as the same people,
but they are reported to be large in terms of the sense of social distance, and in the studies of Lee Soo-Jeong and Yang Gye-Min (2013)[14]. Experience of various contacts with the North Korean refugees turned out to be a factor decreasing the sense of social distance and increasing the extent of understanding.

According to the study of Kim Hee-Jin (2018), measurements were taken on the youth on their sense of social distance towards North Korean refugees and examined the influential factors. Reviewing the study results, regular religious activities proved to have weakened the youth's sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees. In addition, the stronger they perceived threats of the North Korea refugees, the more difficult it was for them to accept the refugees and the larger the sense of social distance[15][16].

3. Research Method

3.1. Investigative method

For this study, a self completion type of questionnaire survey was conducted for 300 police trainees at the Central Police Academy from October 29, 2018 until November 2, 2018. Excluding those who failed to respond completely from the coding process, a total of 228 people responded, whose answers were used for the analysis.

3.2. Variables and measurement tools

3.2.1. Control variables

As a demographic variable, gender, age, educational history, monthly average household income, presence or absence of religion, and the path to being admitted as police were entered as control variables.

As for gender, dummy variables of male 1 and female 0 were entered, and for age, dummy variables of 1 for those in the 20s and 0 for those in the 30s were manipulated for the continuous variable measured as they are. As for the educational history, it was manipulated such as 1 was entered for 4 year college or university or higher and 0 for community college or college or university drop out.

The average monthly household income was entered values measures from 1 to 5, classified into an average monthly household income of '2 million won or less,' 'over 2 million won and 3 million won or less,' 'over 3 million won and 4 million won or less,' and 'over 4 million won and 5 million won or less,' where the higher the score, the higher the economic level. Religious status was manipulated by the dummy variable of 0 for no religion and 1 for having religion. As for the path to being admitted as police, 1 was entered for 'general police officer,' and 0 for '101 unit,' 'special recruitment via police administration department,' 'special recruitment via combat police,' 'cyber investigation and security investigation,' and 'other.'

3.2.2. Key variables

1) Sense of Social Distance

Bogardus, Westie, and others’ Social Distance Scale were applied, while the criterion of "degree of acceptance of social system" was applied for reformation. In this study, the level of acceptance for 7 items such as 'I just know them', 'Joining a club', 'Participating in a club', 'Neighbors', 'Colleagues', 'Friends', 'Spouse of a family' were measured with 1 point for 'I do not agree at all' for being very low for each level of agreement and 2 points for 'I do not agree', whereas neutral points of view were measured at 3 and 4 points, respectively. Five points were manipulated for 'Agree' and 6 points for 'Agree to a large extent' with the values measured from 1 point to 6 points were adjusted to 3 points including neutral points, after which 4 points were given to 'Agree' and 5 points to 'Agree to a large extent.' It may be interpreted that the higher the total score, the lower the sense of social distance of the police trainees towards the North Korean refugees (higher acceptance level), and the lower the score, the higher the sense of social distance towards the refugees (lower acceptance level) (Parrillo and Donohue, 2005). In this study, the reliability of the sense of social distance scale, the value of Cronbach’s , turned out to be .970.

2) Negative Stereotypes

The stereotypes towards the North Korean refugees represent beliefs about the subject,
which is characterized by the cognitive complexity of the subject of the attitude. In this study, the negative stereotypical items for the group were measured with 1 point of ‘I agree’ to 7 points of ‘I do not agree’ for each of the items of ‘They hurt others’, ‘They expect excessive reward’, and ‘They are not reliable.’ After the measurements, they were reverse coded and the total of each variable was turned into parameters and used for analysis, so that the higher the score, the more among the negative stereotypes were manipulated. In this study, the reliability of negative stereotypes turned out to be .903 for Cronbach’s.  

3) Negative Feelings  
The measurement of negative feelings takes on a relatively simple characteristic because the emotional aspect towards the subject has a tendency to manifest in a simple form. The items that express negative feelings were measured as ‘I want to avoid’, ‘I do not feel good towards them’, and ‘It would be awkward to be with them’. They were asked to respond on the degree of sympathy for 1 point for ‘I sympathize’ to 7 points for ‘I do not sympathize’. Likewise, they were reverse coded and the total of each variable was turned into parameters and used for analysis, so that the higher the score, the more among the negative feelings were manipulated. In this study, the reliability of negative stereotypes turned out to be .963 for Cronbach’s.

3.3. Analytical method

Frequency analysis and descriptive statistical analysis were conducted to review and examine the demographic characteristics of the police trainees, who are the investigation subjects, and the sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees. A multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze the effects, which are the final model of this study on the police’s sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees. SPSS 21.0 was used for the tool of the statistical analysis.

4. Research Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics of investigation subjects

Examining the demographic characteristics of a total of 228 police trainees who are the investigation subjects, 86.4%(197 people) were males and 13.6%(31 people) were females. Policemen from age 21 to 40 participated in the survey, and the average age of the respondent policemen was 27.34. Of them, 76.3%(174) were in their 20s and 23.7%(54) were in their 30s or older. As for the level of education, it was distributed from high school graduate to master’s degree or higher, where 54.4%(124 people) graduated from college or university(4 years) and 45.6%(104 people) dropped out of college or university(4 years). As for the average monthly household income, 23.2%(53 people) had ‘over 3 million won and 4 million or less’ followed by 22.9%(52 people) had ‘over 5 million’ and 21.9%(50 people) had ‘2 million won or less’, respectively, while 16.7%(38 people) had ‘over 2 million won and 3 million won or less’ and 15.4%(35 people) had ‘over 4 million won and 5 million or less’ demonstrating similar levels, respectively. As for religion, those having religion were found to be 34.2%(78 people) and 65.8%(150 people) did not have religion. As for the path to being admitted as police, ‘general(police officer)’ was 78.9%(180 people) comprising the most, followed by ‘combat police’ for 9.6%(22 people), ‘others’ for 7.0%(16 people), ‘101 unit’ for 3.9%(9 people), and ‘special recruitment for police administration department’ for 0.4%(1 person), while those who joined police other than through the path of police officer were 21.1%(48 people), respectively.

4.2. Police trainees’ sense of social distance towards North Korean refugees

In order to examine the status of the sense of social distance of the police trainees towards the North Korean refugees, and if you examine the average value for each question, ‘I will not hesitate to be an acquaintance with the North Korean refugees’ turned out to be 5.22, followed by ‘I will not be reluctant to the North Korean refugees joining the club to which I belong’ for 5.15, ‘I will not be reluctant to be a neighbor to the North Korean refugees’ for 5.15, ‘I will not be reluctant to the North Korean refugees becoming a spouse of my
family member’ for 4.30, respectively. While the hierarchical priority of the social distance scale was not clear, the extent of accepting them to be the members of their family showed a lower average value than the other items, thereby demonstrating a relatively lower acceptance level.

4.3. Analysis of factors influencing the police trainees’ sense of social distance towards North Korean refugees

A multiple regression analysis was performed to analyze the factors influencing the sense of social distance of the police trainees towards the North Korean refugees, and the results were confirmed as in Table 1. In Model 1, the demographic variables such as gender, age, educational level, level of monthly household income, presence or absence of religion, and the path to being admitted as police were entered. As explained earlier, in this study, it can be interpreted such that the sense of social distance, as a dependent variable, is the sum of the scores measured with 7 items, and so the higher the score, the closer the sense of social distance, meaning that the level of acceptance of the North Korean refugees is high.

Table 1. Correlation of the newly recruited South Korean police officers’ sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees(n=228).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>Model 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.150</td>
<td>-1.560</td>
<td>-.066</td>
<td>-1.270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.541</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>-1.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic level (household)</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>1.262</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>1.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.096*</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path to being admitted as</td>
<td>-.170</td>
<td>-1.907</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.414</td>
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<tr>
<td>police</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative stereotypes</td>
<td>-.819</td>
<td>-9.887***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant value</td>
<td>26.375</td>
<td>30.370</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj R²</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.719</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F(sig)</td>
<td>1.484</td>
<td>42.986***</td>
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</table>

*p<.1, **p<.05, ***p<.001

In Model 1, it turned out to be β=−0.084, which is statistically significant at significance level of p <.1. This signifies that the level of acceptance of the North Korean refugees is lower if the path to being admitted as police officer, that is, the sense of social distance is far. In addition, the explanatory power of the model for which only demographic variables were entered was low, represented by only 6% (Adjusted R² = .022), was not significant at the significance level. As for Model 2, which was the full model, demographic variables of Model 1 were entered as control variables, and the key variables of the study, which are negative stereotypes and negative feelings, were entered. Examining the results of Model 2, it turned out that negative feelings(β=−9.887 p<.001) had a significant influence on the police trainees’ sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees. That is, the higher the negative feelings, the higher the sense of social distance and the more difficult it was to accept the North Korean refugees, thereby yielding a larger sense of social distance. The Full Model’s explanatory power turned out to be very high at 73% (Adjusted R² = .719), which was statistically significant at the significance level of p <.001.

5. Conclusion and Implication

According to Article 15 of the National Police Agency and Its Affiliated Institutions, the basic areas of duties of security police are specified to be (1) planning and education of security police work, (2) guidance on security observation, and
work for the management of the North Korean refugees and security guard and safety measures. It is likely that the roles of security and the management of the North Korean refugees for the police activities will increase in the future.

When the North Korean refugees arrive in South Korea, they are provided with initial self reliance support, social adjustment education, settlement support, and personal protection. However, so many of them fail to adapt to the Korean society due to economic problems and social prejudice, and consequently, they increasingly become criminal victims and assailants. Police officers must achieve goals by exercising their professional capabilities as volunteers for the people when carrying out their duties (Lee Hwang-Woo, Kim Jin-Hyeok, Yim Chang-Ho, 2014). In addition, the Rules on Police Investigation also provides that the police officers must be considerate for the socially weak in performing their duties. How the preliminary police trainees, who will be responsible for the law enforcement in the future, perceive the subject of the North Korean refugees is absolutely important. Accordingly, this study has examined the preliminary police officers’ sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees and also examined the factors influencing them.

As a result of the study, the police officers’ personally held negative feelings were found to have a significant influence on the police trainees’ sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees. It was also discovered that the higher the negative feelings, the higher the sense of social distance towards the North Korean refugees, that is, the lower the level of acceptance of them.

Accordingly, various training programs must be prepared to help minimize the prejudice and discriminatory attitude of the preliminary police officers. In addition, it will be necessary to identify ways for resolving the negative feelings and negative stereotypes towards the North Korean refugees and provide what is required from the school education, which is the initial step of education. Furthermore, studies at various levels must be conducted spanning from police activities to understanding the North Korean refugees, care and consideration, and their perception.

This study will be meaningful and valuable in that it provides the basic data for the study of the police officers’ perception towards the North Korean refugees and crime prevention activities.

6. References

6.1. Journal articles


### 6.2. Additional references