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How to Resolve Daily Conflicts with Teachers: Perspectives of Korean American Parents with Autistic Children

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How to Resolve Daily Conflicts with Teachers:

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by

Hyeyoung Kim

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

How to Resolve Daily Conflicts with Teachers:

Perspectives of Korean American Parents with Autistic Children

by

Hyeyoung Kim

Doctor of Philosophy in Special Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2025

Professor Connie L. Kasari, Chair

While parental involvement in their children's education is an integral part of special education, challenges arise for both parents and teachers concerning how to get parents involved and how to manage and resolve disagreements between the two parties. Conflict between parents and teachers is a complex phenomenon that occurs under various conditions and in various contexts. To understand this complexity, it is necessary to consider how conflicts are initiated, develop, and resolved. based on actual cases. The primary purpose of the current study is to understand daily conflicts between Korean American (KA) parents of children with autism and the children's teachers, especially those resulting from cultural differences. The study involved 14 Korean immigrant parents of children with autism. The data were obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interview was transcribed, coded, and analyzed via a constant comparison approach based on grounded theory. Grounded theory is a qualitative method used to

develop a theoretical framework for social phenomena. It explores the subjective aspects of human experience to uncover abstract structures relevant to specific situations. The conflict resolution process consists of four stages: the causes of conflict, the escalation of the conflict, the implementation of conflict resolution strategies, and participants' reflections post-conflict. Participants noted that children with disabilities require substantial support in school, prompting concerns about the negative repercussions of conflicts with teachers on these children's development. Consequently, the parents often engage in avoidance behaviors, such as remaining silent or contemplating transferring schools. Furthermore, the impact of culture and language on the conflict resolution process was described in terms of emotional suppression, as well as the use of interpreters and professional advocates. The conflict model theorized in this study may help to establish systems and policies that aim to prevent or reduce parent–teacher conflicts in schools. Such a model will reduce the social costs (e.g., legal actions) associated with the exacerbation of conflicts.

The dissertation of Hyeyoung Kim is approved.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Eugene, Marie, and Jeong Han Kim.

To my first child and only son, **Eugene Kim**, who has been a constant guiding light in my life and a never-ending source of inspiration. Through him, I have learned to empathize deeply with the world around me and found the serenity to face life's challenges. He has taught me the meaning of true love, the preciousness of time, and the strength to persevere through frustration, determination, and acceptance. Above all, he has shown me the wisdom of choosing kindness over proclaiming the truth.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to school-aged children, no two parties are more invested than parents and teachers (Urhahne, 2019). In the traditional view of education, learning is transmitted from an instructor to students, with both parties physically present in the same space, usually a classroom (Whyte & Karabon, 2016). In such situations, teachers concern themselves with their agendas for delivering information to students, while parents, although equally responsible for their children's education as the teachers, serve as supporters (i.e., homework helpers) and step back from their children's learning (Epstein, 2010). After federal mandates required schools to empower parents to become more involved in their children's education (U.S. Department of Education, 2004), a paradigm shift toward more equitable partnerships between school and home occurred (Ishimaru, 2019).

For children with disabilities, parents' participation and its critical role in children's learning have been encouraged and confirmed over the decades. First, extensive research has shown that the participation of parents of children with disabilities produces greater student learning outcomes in all domains (Powell, 2010), enhances the motivation to learn, and decreases behavioral problems (e.g., absences) (Kaukab, 2016). Second, the law ensures the right of parents to be involved in developing educational plans for their children with disabilities (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], 1997). Finally, students with disabilities are more sensitive than their peers to environmental influences, including not only the emotional bond between a teacher and student but also the ease of communication and cooperation between teacher and parent (Kaukab, 2016). However, challenges arise for both the parents and the

teachers in terms of how to get the parents involved in their children's education and how to manage and resolve disagreements when they arise (Bang, 2018).

Parents and educators often have different views of what "parental involvement" means due to their past experiences with each other and their expectations of the educational system (Myers-Young, 2018; Whyte & Karabon, 2016). For example, some educators think that parental involvement entails parents being involved in the educational process, such as by helping with school activities or assisting with their children's assignments (Anderson & Minke, 2007). Some teachers may dislike parental involvement if it does not meet their expectations (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Trainor, 2010a). For instance, some educators expect all parents to participate in ways that align with "traditionally middle-class norms", such as attending school meetings during work hours, volunteering in the classroom, or engaging in formal communication with teachers, which may not be feasible for all families (Coleman & Churchill, 1997). However, this expectation can be problematic for parents with limited resources or different cultural norms (i. e., Korean American) as they might engage in different forms of support that do not align with mainstream practice. Consequently, minority parents often report their dissatisfaction with teachers' attitudes and child's subjective experience, school standards, and school programming and activities that are not considerate of cultural diversities (Lareau & Horvat, 1999;Mueller et al., 2008). Generally, while parental involvement in their children's education has brought numerous benefits (e.g., increased academic and behavioral outcomes), it has also served to sharpen the gap between parents and teachers, leading to potential tension and conflict.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the 1990s, researchers began to consider culture as an important element in understanding disability (Eskay et al., 1998). Multiple studies have revealed that significant

numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students are disproportionately represented in special education settings relative to their population percentage (Hibel et al., 2010). Additionally, CLD students experience higher rates of academic failure compared to their peers (Bottiani et al., 2017). To ensure equal educational opportunities for disabled children from CLD backgrounds and to minimize discrimination due to racial/cultural differences, educators have pursued cultural diversity trainings to create more inclusive and accepting school environments (Vincent et al., 2011).

For parents raising a child with disabilities, developing a strong intercultural relationship with the child's school can be advantageous and productive; however, in the absence of such a relationship, conflicts can develop. Conflict can occur when individuals or groups have different interests, beliefs, goals, ideas, resources, or values (Boardman, 2002). Culture is an important factor in conflict, as it inherently affects people's attitudes, life choices, identities, and behaviors. Although numerous studies have addressed tensions between school stakeholders, including teachers, students with disabilities, and administrators (Adalbjarnardottir & Willett, 1991; Iordanides et al., 2014; Forehand & Smith, 1972), conflicts between parents of children with disabilities and teachers—particularly those arising from cultural differences—have not been sufficiently researched.

Between 2000 and 2019, Asian Americans comprised the fastest-growing population among all racial and ethnic groups in the US (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021). While Asian American children are often underrepresented across most disability categories (e.g., learning disabilities and emotional disturbance) when qualifying for special education in school setting, those diagnosed with autism are placed at levels comparable to their White counterpart (Foley, 2019). This cultural phenomenon suggests not only an epistemological and pathological link between

autism and certain perceptions in Asian culture but also highlights the importance of understanding how Asian American families with autistic children collaborate with teachers to address their children's unique educational needs. This involves considering cultural values, communication styles, and expectations that may influence how these families navigate the educational system.

Korean Americans represent the fifth largest group of Asian Americans (after Chinese-, Filipino-, Indian-, and Vietnamese-Americans), making up slightly more than two percent of the US's 44.9 million immigrants in 2019 (Esterline & Batalova, 2022). While Korean culture shares many traditional values and ideologies (e.g., collectivism and Confucianism) with other Asian cultures, Korean ethnicity, language, and behavioral patterns are distinct and rooted in Korea's unique history and customs. Unfortunately, many studies of Asians conducted in the US recognize them as a homogenous group, blurring their distinctive characteristics (Kim & Dodds, 2024). Thus, the current study will focus on the cultural context of conflicts between Korean American families with autistic children and teachers delivering special education services to them.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Conflict is a complex phenomenon that occurs under various conditions and in various contexts. To understand this complexity, it is necessary to explore and theorize how conflict initiates, develops, and resolves based on actual cases. The primary purpose of this study is to understand daily conflicts between Korean American (KA) parents of children with autism and the children's teachers, especially in relation to cultural influences. Given the lack of consideration of cultural factors in previous studies of conflict in the special education context, this study assumes culture to be an important factor in contributing to conflict between teachers

and parents in special education settings. Thus, the current qualitative study will investigate the conflict resolution process between KA parents of children with autism and the children's teachers by focusing on culture and its impact. Specifically, the research question is as follows: How do Korean American parents of autistic children resolve conflicts with their children's teachers?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Both parents and teachers seek strong partnerships to enable children with disabilities to maximize their educational opportunities and enhance their achievements. However, not all cooperation is successful or has harmonious outcomes. The current study aims to investigate the conflicts that occur between the parents of children with autism and the children's teachers. As this is a cultural study, all studies in the literature review will be discussed in terms of the roles of cultural differences in conflict. Thus, in this review, I will first present how definitions of conflict differ in Korea and the US. Then, I will discuss the key factors that alleviate or exacerbate conflict (i.e., cultural context and communication as well as advocacy and social capital). Lastly, I will explore the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA's) dispute resolution process and its implications for the study.

Definition of Conflict in Two Countries

In the Korean language, the word for *conflict* (갈등; *galdeung*, 葛藤) is derived from a Chinese character that combines arrowroot reeds (갈; *gal*, 葛) and wisteria (등; *deung*, 藤), both of which are climbing vines. When these two plants grow together in one place, the stem of the arrowroot reeds trails to the right while the wisteria wraps around it to the left when viewed from the side. Thereby, the growth direction of one plant naturally influences that of the other until they collide and conflict occurs. *Conflict* in the Korean language refers to a state in which individuals or groups with different goals or interests oppose each other or clash (National Institution of the Korean Language, 2023).

In English, *conflict* is derived from the Latin word *confligere*, which means to "strike together" or "be in opposition, be contrary or at variance" (Etymonline, 2023). The *Cambridge*

Dictionary (2023) defines *conflict* as an active disagreement between two or more groups of people or countries with opposing opinions or principles. To compare the definitions between the Korean and English cultures, the Korean definition describes a conflict metaphorically by describing how two different growing trees interfere each other's growth, but both countries define *conflict* as a state in which two or more opposite impulses, desires, and motives that have difficulty coexisting are present at the same time.

In many cases, conflict is perceived as a negative phenomenon because of its adverse results such as causing disparities among individuals or organizations, which impede group cohesion. In addition, conflict often heightens the hostility between individuals/groups, increasing distrust and antagonism and decreasing work performance (productivity) and job satisfaction (Czyz-Szypenbejl et al., 2022). However, not all conflicts are negative. Well-managed conflicts can promote a process for positive effects. First, the amount of information and knowledge concerning a subject of conflict can increase as varied opinions for and against it arise, and may induce innovation and change in individuals and/or groups (organizations). When a conflict is resolved before it becomes extremely deep and catastrophic, the social and economic costs that the individuals and/or groups involved might need to pay can be greatly reduced compared with when the conflict is allowed to persist (Overton & Lowry, 2013).

Conflict is universal and inherent in any organization. Although conflict has both positive and negative aspects of its nature, it should be resolved as soon as possible because when conflict festers, productivity suffers and negativity spreads (Carsen, 2015). On the basis of their definitions of *conflict*, the two countries appear to have a similar understanding of what conflict means, but how both cultures cope with and react to conflict have not been extensively studied, warranting a study on the cultural impact of conflict.

Role of Culture in Conflict

Communication and Cultural Context

As proper communication varies between cultures, what is understood and appreciated in one society might be understood as offensive in another. Hall (1976) distinguished between two communication patterns in terms of their cultural contexts: "high-context cultures" and "low-context cultures." He explained that individuals who live in a high-context culture value the setting and situation in their communication, whereas those who live in a low-context culture focus on the message. In general, Europeans are considered to belong to a low-context culture, whereas Asians belong to a high-context one. In a high-context culture, communication takes place indirectly; human relationships and saving face are valued more than efficiency and accuracy. Therefore, in a high-context culture, individuals pay much attention to the gestures, facial expressions, and circumstances of the speaker. Trying to discern hidden meanings is more important than the speaker's words. In contrast, in a low-context culture, direct and efficient communication is preferred. When people from a low-context culture communicate, they focus on the use and meaning of specific words and the factual relationships established in the content of the conversation. For individuals from low-context cultures, discussions between people from high-context cultures can feel ambiguous, unclear, and irresponsible. Conversely, for individuals from high-context cultures, the conversations of people from low-context cultures can seem rude, arrogant, and hurtful (Nam, 2015). Different communication styles affect how conflict is handled. For example, individuals from high-context cultures believe that sending messages or having discussions when conflict arises worsens the situation (or the relationship). On the contrary, in low-context cultures, when conflicts arise, people tend to express their opinions and perspectives more directly (Hall & Hall, 1990; Nam, 2015).

Communicating with teachers is more difficult when parents are not proficient in English. (Fong et al., 2022). Many studies have found that parents' English proficiencies are negatively associated with receiving information and obtaining special education services (e.g., Cho & Gannotti, 2005). Moreover, parents who are not fluent in English tend to depend on teachers' attitudes in forming relationships with them. In one study, for example, parents were able to build more positive relationships with teachers who tried to minimize misunderstandings when communicating (Cho & Gannotti, 2005). This evidence suggests that teachers and parents whose primary language is not English may develop unequal power relationships, particularly in conflict situations. However, teachers can take proactive steps, such as using culturally responsive communication strategies and providing language support, to help bridge these gaps and foster more equitable relationships (Ramirez, 2015).

Advocacy and Social Capital

Advocacy refers to the act of giving another person or group of people a voice to help address their preferences, strengths, and needs (Wolfensberger, 1977). Trainor (2010a) argued that in special education, the term *advocacy* is usually used to describe a vital responsibility of parents of children with disabilities, especially in an inclusive setting, to fight against elements/factors that put their children at risk of being disadvantaged or treated improperly. However, many studies have shown that the social capital available to CLD families influences their advocate's strategy and both the quality and quantity of approaches parents can use to protect their children when conflict occurs in school, resulting in divergent outcomes (Garip, 2008; Trainor, 2010b).

Bourdieu (1986) defined *social capital* as the total amount of actual or potential resources acquired through membership in a particular group through enduring networks or relationships.

As social capital is a resource embodied in relationships between sources and recipients, recipients obtain greater amounts or better quality of resources from their strongly tied sources (Garip, 2008). Therefore, an important concept in social capital is social network. Through the network of groups to which a person belongs, a person can secure scarce resources (Portes, 1998). These ideas suggest that the insufficient social connections and resources of CLD families (e.g., immigrants) might weaken their advocacy for their children with disabilities when conflict arises (i.e., acquiring services).

For example, Cho and Gannotti (2005) found that Korean American immigrant families seek critical information for their children with disabilities through the Korean community in the U.S. rather than rely on teachers or health professionals from the dominant culture. This was because information that was considered common knowledge in the dominant culture was often not communicated to the parents because of the assumption that it was universal knowledge. In addition, school districts and community-based facilities provide training and workshops for CLD parents of children with disabilities to empower their advocacy skills in the IEP meeting; most programs were reported to be offered only in English. Such a barrier makes it even more difficult to access resources for CLD families of children with disabilities.

Many studies have found that Korean American parents of children with disabilities are more compliant and less assertive toward teachers; they are also reluctant to develop negative relationships with teachers (Nguyen & Hughes, 2013; Park &Turnbull, 2001; Park et al., 2001). In one study, Park and her colleagues (2001) examined the partnerships between Korean American parents of disabled children and teachers and reported that the former tried to listen to and follow the latter's opinion without disagreeing or asking questions. The author found that even parents who were highly acculturated in the American culture preferred to communicate in

written form rather than talk directly. Moreover, when they complained to teachers, Korean American parents struggled to find the most modest expressions and failed to criticize the teacher openly.

In conclusion, CLD families do not have a solid social network where they can obtain essential information for their children's education. Furthermore, Asian parents (including Korean Americans) do not have a cultural pattern of behavior that is accustomed to advocating for their children's entitled rights. There could be various mechanisms by which Asian American parents of children with disabilities operate and apply their social capital when they advocate their children, thereby acquiring services and solving the conflict. However, little is known about this issue, warranting further study.

The IDEA and A Dispute Resolution Process

The IDEA provides parents and guardians with the right to act on their child's behalf in resolving disputes with schools that are related to the "identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child with special needs, or the provision of a free and appropriate public education [FAPE]" (California Department of Education, 2022). The current IDEA dispute resolution for families of children with disabilities includes mediation options, due process hearing, and the most recent option of a resolution meeting (Mueller & Piantoni, 2013). A due process hearing is the most legally binding resolution procedure and requires a review of evidence, written and/or oral testimony, and the request to use an attorney for representation (Blackwell & Blackwell, 2015). Being an intense litigious procedure typically dominated by lawyers, due process is costly and time-consuming; thus, it has been criticized for its inaccessibility for everyone who might need this procedure. Mediation, which was added as a resolution option during the IDEA 1997 reauthorization, is considered a relatively less expensive

and more proactive method than due process hearing because it allows for the use of an impartial mediator and provides opportunities for disputing parties to reach agreement before the case progresses to an appeal in court (Blackwell & Blackwell, 2015). A resolution meeting, which was included since the IDEA 2004 reauthorization, is distinguished from mediation, which is a voluntary action, by being required once a parent files a due process complaint. Resolution meetings focus on the parties' effective communication in determining a solution and prescribe that bargaining between the parties be conducted outside the court, though attorneys may attend these meetings (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). As a result, it is considered a less adversarial mechanism than mediation (Mueller et al., 2008).

Dispute resolution meetings must be convened once parents file for a due process hearing, although some districts also use them for other disputes arising from IEP meetings. Introducing mediation or resolution meetings might provide a buffer before a conflict becomes severe enough to be dragged into formal legal proceedings such as a due process hearing. Mueller (2015) noted that the IDEA 2004 reauthorization has contributed to an overall decrease in due process hearings because many districts have become more effective at resolving disputes with parents in the early stages of a conflict rather than delaying resolution until the final stage of a due process hearing. However, despite the benefits of mediation or resolution meetings, the use and effects of dispute resolution procedures are still considered destructive for both parties (Mueller & Piantoni, 2013). For example, formal dispute procedures, including a resolution meeting, are considered parents' last resort for resolving conflicts and chosen only when the relationship between teachers and parents has already been irreversibly damaged. In addition, during a dispute, parents often feel anxious and concerned about the potential adverse effects on their children who are still attending school while the process of conflict resolution is ongoing

(Lasater, 2016). Upon reaching the stage of mediation or due process hearings, the situation would have already become serious. The general trend in the outcomes of complaints filed by parents has been toward decisions that are entirely or partially favorable for districts (Blackwell & Gomez, 2019; Cisneros, 2022; Colker, 2014). Moreover, when conflicts escalate to a formal dispute procedure, the prolonged battle and costs of the conflict weaken parents' confidence about speaking up, which in turn causes significant stress, especially for low-income families or those in single-parent situations (Mueller & Carranza, 2011).

School personnel, including teachers, are also negatively affected by conflict resolutions that require legal action. Many administrators have reported high levels of stress and frustration because they must spend time and resources preparing the necessary documents (Mueller & Piantoni, 2013). Moreover, teachers are frequently concerned about their reputations and job stability when a conflict with parents extends beyond their control (Laster, 2016). Even after a resolution is reached, restoring a broken relationship with parents remains a concern for teachers.

While the dispute resolution procedure ensured by the IDEA is limited to issues related to special education services, conflicts between parents and teachers occur in both formal and informal contexts and incidents. That is, subtle conflicts such as those arising from poor communication or misunderstandings between parents and teachers have not been acknowledged in IDEA dispute resolutions, despite the risk of leading to greater conflict.

Wiener (2009) argued that all responsible parties should realize that winning without losing in court is impossible. Thus, the best way to succeed is to resolve differences and disagreements and find resolutions before they go beyond control. Problems and disagreements cannot be avoided when parents and teachers discuss children's education. However, minimizing the negative effects of the conflict resolution process and successfully completing it should be

included as goals for both parents and teachers. Resolving parent–teacher conflicts before they escalate to a mediation, resolution meeting, or due process hearing should be the ideal. Thus, it is incumbent to reveal the situations (especially cultural context) that cause conflict in schools and the development and consequences of those conflicts and identify implications to better deal with them.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Research Questions:

How do Korean American parents of autistic children resolve daily conflicts with their children's teachers?

Research Design: Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology designed to develop a theoretical framework for social phenomena or processes that are not yet fully understood. This method focuses on exploring the subjective aspects of human experience and aims to generate or uncover abstract and analytical structures pertinent to specific situations or phenomena (Creswell, 2005). Grounded theory posits that social reality is constructed and is part of a dynamic, evolving process in human interactions (Lindqvist et al., 2023). Consequently, this approach employs an inductive methodology, relying on real-world data collected from cases or samples rather than testing or refuting existing theories or preconceived notions (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The coding process inherent in grounded theory undergoes continuous refinement and adaptation throughout the study (Holton, 2006), facilitating the illumination of foundational concepts for theory development and allowing for the creative evolution of theoretical constructs (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Application of Grounded Theory in the Proposed Study

The proposed study utilizes grounded theory for several reasons: a) There is a lack of research examining the conflict resolution process between teachers and KA parents within the special education field; b) Grounded theory is particularly effective when focusing on the "process" of specific phenomena (Tie et al., 2019); and c) This methodology allows for a

nuanced exploration of parent-teacher interactions in conflict resolution, capturing not only temporal dynamics but also interactive aspects such as changes in emotions, thoughts, actions, and reactions.

Recruitment

The initial participants were recruited through various methods: 1) leveraging my personal network (specifically, the parent support group I'm a part of), 2) reaching out to a community-based autism network, and 3) placing advertisements on a website commonly frequented by Korean-American immigrants. The rationale behind utilizing multiple avenues for recruitment was to ensure flexibility and to encompass a diverse range of participants, including those from different socioeconomic backgrounds and educational levels. This approach facilitated an analysis of conflict situations at various levels.

Theoretical Sampling

Grounded theory necessitates interactive recruiting, or theoretical sampling, where continuous recruitment and interviews are conducted concurrently with data analysis to ensure that the data collected is relevant and evolves in response to emerging insights. The recruitment process involves multiple rounds to refine the sample and deepen understanding of the phenomenon under study (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Consequently, in the current study, the stages of data collection, classification, analysis, and consultation were almost simultaneously and iteratively carried out. The first round of recruitment included three parents, and the second round included eight parents. During the analysis of data from 11 parents, another round of active recruitment was conducted. Recruitment continued until data saturation was reached, culminating in a total of 14 participants.

Participants

The study included 14 Korean-American participants who experienced any form of conflict with teachers – both special education and general education teachers – in the context of special education, regardless of the stage of the conflict. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: (a) self-identified Korean Americans living in the United States (e.g., first or second generation), (b) a parent or primary caregiver (hereafter referred to as parent) with at least one child who has autism and has received special education services from an individualized education program (IEP) in the past or present, and (c) individuals who have encountered conflicts with teachers.

Out of the total 14 participants, six were recruited through the researcher's direct or indirect contacts. These participants were either acquaintances known through the researcher's support group activities or were referred by members of the support group. During the recruitment process, the researcher explained the purpose and nature of the research, as well as the interview process, and all participants expressed a willingness to participate. To mitigate any potential psychological burden stemming from the pre-existing relationships, I assured participants that they could share their experiences as comfortably as they wished and guaranteed confidentiality regarding the interview content prior to starting the sessions. After the interviews, I asked the participants if any questions made them uncomfortable or that they found difficult to answer; all participants indicated that they had no such concerns.

The remaining eight participants voluntarily contacted me after seeing an advertisement posted on a website (i.e., MissyUSA.com) and within a community-based network for Korean American parents with autistic children at elementary, middle, and high school. For those expressing interest, I scheduled an intake session to explain the participation process in detail, including the study’s purpose, interview duration, and precautions. Participants were also

informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time during the interview without penalty. All participants proceeded to the interview stage after providing verbal consent. Regardless of the researcher's intent, all participants were female, and information such as participants' age, educational level, duration of residence in the U.S., and their children's gender, age, and verbal ability are presented in Table 1. Note that the "Level of spoken language" presented in this table refers to the child's expressive language level as subjectively perceived by the parents.

The participants in this study predominantly represent a high socioeconomic status (SES) (see Table 1). To achieve a diverse sample, I employed a multiple layer recruitment, including the use of personal networks, outreach to community-based autism networks, and the dissemination of advertisements, rather than relying solely on snowball or purposive sampling methods. Despite these efforts, the majority of participants belong to a demographic with an annual income exceeding $100,000. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors. First, the focus of this study is on conflict, which inherently requires a certain level of parental involvement in education to manifest in interactions between parents and teachers. Numerous studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between SES and parental educational involvement (See Hill & Tyson, 2009). Second, six out of the fourteen participants were recruited through the researcher's direct or indirect contact. These individuals possess graduate degrees, and their spouses similarly have a high level of education. Consequently, they demonstrate elevated income levels. Overall, despite facing challenges related to limited language proficiency and cultural barriers, the parents in this study can be characterized as Korean Americans who are actively engaged in and deeply reflective about their children's education.

Interview Protocol

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews using open-ended interview questions developed by the present researcher, conducted in the form of conversations that allow for flexibility in question sequences, flow, style, and editing. To develop the interview questions, related literature was first reviewed, and a draft interview form was prepared. The initial interview form was reviewed by two doctoral students who a) have experience working with parents and teachers of children with autism, b) have knowledge of special education, and c) have experience in using qualitative research methods. The final interview protocol was used as a guideline for the interview. The interview protocol included (a) demographics, (b) an acknowledgment of the conflict, (c) conflict development and management, and (d) conflict resolution and aftermath (e.g., how the conflict started, escalated, was resolved, and the situation after the conflict) (See Appendix A).

Interview Process

The interviews were conducted over a period of approximately six months, from June 21, 2023, to January 22, 2024. Interviews were scheduled and conducted via cell phone or Zoom, depending on the participant's preference and location. They were recorded using an audio voice technology service and private, password-locked recorders to ensure confidentiality. All interviews were conducted in the participant’s preferred and most comfortable language, Korean. Each interview lasted between one to two hours, and one participant was invited for a follow-up interview to provide further clarification after having to leave the initial session prematurely, which impacted her ability to fully articulate her experiences of conflict.

Initial interviews with the first two or three participants were conducted to collect preliminary data. In accordance with the grounded theory methodology, systematic data analysis was

performed. This involved analyzing primary data before determining additional data needs. Consequently, the interview questions and their sequence were continuously reviewed and revised throughout the data collection process, While the general questions regarding the overall process of conflict and its aftermath were consistently asked of all participants, specific inquiries were adjusted based on ongoing analysis and participants' experiences. This iterative approach facilitated better anticipation of interview durations and informed the necessity for follow-up interviews in subsequent rounds. Throughout the interview process, the researcher maintained an attentive listening stance without leading or suggesting answers, encouraging participants to share their experiences freely in an open and unstructured manner. Each interview participant was given a $20 gift card as a token of appreciation following their interview.

Transcription Process

All the digital interview audio files of the interview were transcribed in written form. During this process, any personal information that could identify participants was removed or replaced to ensure confidentiality. Each transcript underwent a thorough accuracy check, comparing the recorded interviews with the transcriptions.

Given that all interviews were conducted in Korean, the initial transcriptions were completed verbatim in Korean. As the final report of this study was written in English, keywords, sentences, and paragraphs from the Korean transcripts were translated into English for coding and analysis purposes. These translations were reviewed by a bilingual doctoral student proficient in both English and Korean to ensure the accuracy of word choices and the fidelity of meaning.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis of interview content was conducted following the grounded theory methodology outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2014). This approach encompasses three types of coding: open coding, axial coding, and theoretical coding, each serving a distinct purpose in dissecting and comprehending the data.

During the initial stages of open coding analysis, a meticulous approach was adopted, focusing on word-by-word and/or sentence-by-sentence examination before gradually expanding to paragraphs or entire documents (Charmaz, 2014). This thorough process facilitated a comprehensive understanding and review of the data.

In multiple readings of the interviews, particularly, I distinguished between necessary and unnecessary information from the extensive raw data (approximately 1000 pages) by segmenting and highlighting sentences and paragraphs that were clearly relevant or contained essential key points pertinent to the research objective prior to the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2014; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The segmenting process was carried out in four stages. Firstly, while reading the transcribed interviews, essential words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs were highlighted, and comments and notes were added. The second segmenting stage involved a similar process, conducted separately. The third segmenting integrated the content from the first and second stages, removing irrelevant or unnecessary segments from the initial reviews, and incorporating new insights discovered during the third review. Finally, a thorough review of both the original and segmented data ensured that no additional information needed to be included or removed, thereby completing the segmenting process.

To maintain consistent codes in the segmented data, continuous comparisons between existing and new codes were conducted. In this iterative comparison process, codes were

clustered and categorized when the participants' behavior patterns or statements showed redundancy and were repeated across the interview data. The open coding process was completed when no new codes and categorizations were generated as it was determined to have reached a state of saturation.

In the axial coding, the focus shifted to establishing semantic relationships within and between codes and categories. Axial coding involves the classification, comparison, integration, reorganization, deletion, and movement of multiple codes and categories, aiming to generate abstract categories and clarify the characteristics and interrelationships. Thus, axial coding is more selective and conceptual than the codes and categories derived from open coding (Glaser, 1978).

In the axial coding process of the current study, I reorganized codes and categories identified during open coding. This step was crucial for delving into and elucidating the causes, context, condition, actions and interactions, and outcomes associated with the core phenomenon: the conflict resolution process between parents and teachers.

Theoretical coding synthesizes all significant categories to refine the theory further (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Charmaz, 2014). This process organizes the central phenomenon of the study by clearly delineating the relationships between abstract concepts or categories, thereby facilitating the integration and reintegration of the theory. In this study, I focused on the conflict resolution process between parents and teachers, aiming to understand how conflicts initiate, evolve, and conclude. I identified core categories for each stage of this process and outlined the narrative. During the theoretical coding phase, I employed both deductive and inductive reasoning to re-examine the relationships among data, codes, and categories. This enhanced the accuracy of data interpretation and provided deeper insights into the underlying meanings.

Additionally, reflective memoing played a critical role in identifying the final grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Consequently, the final theory emerged directly from data gathered in an authentic, real-time social context.

Overall, through coding of the rich data, patterns of thought and behavior within and between the participants were revealed, leading to the development of the ultimate grounded theory for this study. The theory encompasses all conceptual components related to parents' cultural background and intervening strategies as they affect the conflict resolution process and its real-world consequences for the participants, specifically Korean American parents of children with autism

Constant Comparison

In grounded theory, coding serves as the fundamental initial process for uncovering the 'meaning' of phenomena as perceived by participants. Throughout this process, the researcher must engage in constant comparison of the data. This concept is a central tenet of grounded theory methodology, as articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Charmaz (2006, 2014). Constant comparison entails categorizing materials through systematic comparison and contrast of the interview data collected from each participant. This process encompasses 'within-participant comparison' and 'between-participants comparison' (Basinger et al., 2015).

In this study, within-participant comparison involved the repeated evaluation of similarities, differences, patterns, and relationships in participants' narratives, focusing on changes in thoughts or perceptions regarding conflict definition, viewpoints, and self-reflection from the beginning to the end of the interview.

Between-participant comparison consisted of continuously comparing the data of existing participants with that of new ones, as well as aligning established codes with newly generated ones. This ongoing process aids in refining categories, developing theoretical insights, and interpreting data grounded in evidence, while also mitigating bias through consistent scrutiny of data interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Positionality

I acknowledge that my positionality, encompassing my roles as the mother of a child with autism, a Korean-American immigrant, and a former special education teacher, influenced this study to some extent. First, as the mother of a child with autism, I actively engage in discussions with other parents of children with autism—both online and offline—to share experiences and insights into the challenges faced by raising special needs children in the United States. Given my firsthand experience, I approach these conversations with an open mind and a deep understanding, allowing me to fully empathize with parents who encounter similar difficulties during the data collection (i.e., recruiting, and conducting interviews).

Second, being a first-generation Korean immigrant adds another layer of insight into understanding and seeking services for children with disabilities. Immigrants often bring unique perspectives and networks to childcare and education, prompting me to contemplate ways to overcome the barriers and prejudices that hinder cultural diversity and inclusivity. Given that all participants in this study were first-generation Korean immigrants, this dimension of my background proved beneficial for formulating specific interview questions and conveying the complexities of their situations.

Third, my experience as a former special education teacher equips me with a comprehensive understanding of the school system, educational purpose, policies regarding

Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, student management, accessibility to information, and a sense of mission. While this study explores conflicts between parents and teachers, I am also confronted with conflicting aspects of my identity as both a parent of an autistic child and a former teacher. Recognizing the importance of representing parents' perspectives, I made a conscious effort to minimize the influence of my teacher background during data analysis and interpretation while also acknowledging that my experience as a teacher may provide valuable insights into the conflicts being studied. Ultimately, I aimed to ensure that the authentic voices of parents of children with autism were accurately conveyed.

Security

All paper copies of participant-related forms, transcripts, and other documents were stored in a locked file cabinet at the present researcher's home office. Electronic data files and documents were stored in password-protected folders on a personal computer and backed up with password-protected folders on the iCloud server.

Efforts and Processes to Ensure the Rigor of the Study

This study underwent the following processes to enhance its rigor. First, to minimize bias stemming from preconceived notions about conflicts between parents and teachers or cultural limitations related to the participants' backgrounds, I endeavored to conduct the study as faithfully to the data as possible. This effort aimed to ensure that the study results accurately reflected the participants' experiences.

Additionally, to mitigate threats to validity that could arise from potential misinterpretations of data due to my subject perspective, efforts were made to maintain neutrality throughout the study. This included engaging in discussions with individuals holding doctoral degrees and possessing expertise in qualitative research at every stage of the process.

Furthermore, to assess the applicability of the research findings, one parent of a child with autism who did not participate in the study was asked to review the result for relevance based on their experience. This process confirmed that the findings of this study resonated with the experiences of other parents not involved in the interviews. These approaches not only facilitated the exchange of perspectives between I and external parties (i.e., doctoral researchers and parents of autistic children) but also provided valuable opportunities for discussing various challenges, thereby enriching the overall research endeavor.

Reliability

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, a Ph.D. professional specializing in working with adults with disabilities and a doctoral student with expertise in qualitative data analysis, autism, and family dynamics were invited to volunteer. The relevance and appropriateness of the initial codes and themes were evaluated in monthly meetings. The process involved sharing and discussing codes during the open coding phase to confirm their alignment with the research objectives. Any unnecessary or conflicting codes were reviewed and resolved through comprehensive discussion. In accordance with the constant comparison principle, new codes were systematically compared with existing ones to refine higher-level themes and categories. Specifically, since the constant comparative method involves an ongoing process of comparing the similarities and differences of the emerging categories against the data collected, each coder contributes to the unification and integration of categories in a way that captures all instances of variation within the emerging theory (Cheung & Tai, 2021; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). During constant comparative coding, discrepancies were addressed through open dialogue, ultimately leading to a consensus between coders on the final codes and categories. This rigorous process ensured the reliability of the codes and categories in this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Conflicts between parents and teachers in educational settings occur frequently, transcending both time and location. These conflicts can inflict significant emotional distress on parents, teachers, or both parties. This study provides an in-depth analysis of how Korean immigrant parents of school-aged children with autism navigate and resolve conflicts with teachers. The 14 participating parents exhibited a range of characteristics, including varying ages, lengths of residence in the United States, English proficiency, and degrees of their child's disability, leading to a rich diversity of individual experiences. By examining the recurring patterns of conflict present in these cases and categorizing the overlapping codes, this research seeks to develop a comprehensive framework for understanding these complex interactions.

The results and the conflict resolution stages are derived from the data collected from 14 parent participants and analyzed using grounded theory. This study delineates the conflict resolution process into four distinct stages, with a detailed description of the dynamics that unfold between parents and teachers at each stage.: Stage 1: What Causes Conflict? Stage 2: What Exacerbates the Conflict? Stage 3: What Resolves or Unresolved Conflict, and Stage 4: What Remains? (see Table 1)

Stage 1: What Causes Conflict?

Child Behavior

Stage 1 outlined the initial onset and origin of the conflict. In this study, the causes of conflict between parents and teachers were grouped into three categories: child behavior, parent behavior, and teacher behavior. Child behavior emerged as a significant conflict trigger, particularly when the child's behavioral traits, such as limited social skills and/or difficulty

adapting to peers were perceived as problematic. This perception resulted in a diminished role for the child in the classroom and heightened parental anxiety about the child's school experience, regardless of the child's educational placement (i.e., specialized unit, full inclusion, or partial pull-out).

Specific issues related to child behavior included peer misunderstandings due to the child's inability to read social cues (P6), aggressive behavior problems (P1), self-harming behavior (P4), transition challenges (P14), and unpredictable mood swings (P2). For instance, P6's son was mistakenly perceived as aggressive by peers while demonstrating a taekwondo move due to his inability to interpret his peer's reaction. P4's daughter engaged in self-harming behavior by hitting her head against the wall, which led to frequent early dismissals from school. Similarly, P14's son, returning to school after the pandemic, exhibited anxiety and separated from his classmates on his first day back. P2's son experienced mood swings from ADHD medication, which became a trigger for conflict between parents and teachers.

Conflicts stemming from child behavior were intensified when the child had limited language abilities (P2, P3, P4). Parents were concerned about their child's school experience because the child could not properly describe events occurring at school. Consequently, parents of children with limited language skills often inferred their child's school experience by observing their physical condition, monitoring behaviors at home (e.g., grumpy mood after school), and assessing their reactions to teachers or paraprofessionals. For example, P4 explained, "My son doesn't speak well, so when he comes home, I check his body for any signs of injury since he cannot tell us what happened at school."

Teacher Behavior

Incidents involving participants' dissatisfaction with the teacher's attitude, communication style, or problem-solving ability were categorized as teacher behavior. These included situations where the teacher responded to the child's problematic behavior by placing the child in a separate environment (P11) or excluding them from specific activities (P13, P14). Additionally, this category covered instances where teachers failed to address safety plans for children who were victims of bullying (P12, P13) or displayed indifference or neglect when care was needed (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P11), as well as ongoing difficulties expressed by teachers in guiding the children (P2). For example, P13 recounted an experience during kindergarten graduation day: "While other children went up one by one to receive their diplomas, the teacher prevented the special class kids from doing so. When I asked why my child couldn't participate, the teacher said, 'Because your child has behavioral issues, they might cause a scene [if they go up on the stage].' P13 was frustrated by the teacher's decision and voiced her concerns, but her son was not allowed to participate in the graduation ceremony in the same manner as the other children.

Similarly, P12 described ongoing issues with her son being bullied by a classmate. Despite repeated concerns communicated to the teacher, the situation was not effectively managed: "That child [the bully] is really problematic. He physically attacks my son and sometimes spits on the teacher. We repeatedly asked the teacher to address how he was harming my son, but the teacher only said he would pay more attention, and nothing changed."

Parent Behavior

Conflicts arising due to parental reasons were categorized under parental behavior. As all participants described conflicts from the parents' perspectives, incidents involving parental behavior were observed less frequently than those involving child or teacher behavior. Issues

related to parental behavior included excessive worrying about the child (P4, P14), lack of understanding of the child's disability and the level of support required (P1, P3, P9), and contacting the principal directly without first discussing issues with the teacher (P12).

In this interview, participants who analyzed the causes of parent-teacher conflicts from the most critical perspective on parental behavior were P1 and P3. Both P1 and P3 highlighted that conflicts can arise when parents do not fully understand their child's disability. P1 noted that many parents, including herself, often struggled to understand their child's specific needs objectively. She suggested that accurately assessing the child's abilities and discussing their true needs with the teacher or other school personnel could significantly reduce conflicts. For instance, P3 recounted her past experiences of fervently advocating for her son to be placed in a regular classroom. However, she explained that she no longer argues with the school regarding her child's placement because she realized that such a placement would not be beneficial for him. She clarified, "I realized that certain issues would not be resolved unless the child's abilities improved," which led her to cease arguing with the school.

Cultural Context: What to Consider a Conflict, When to Speak up, and How to Approach It

When I asked parents what they consider to be a conflict with teachers or the starting point of conflict, the majority identified it as differing expectations or opinions regarding their child's services and/or educational plan (P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P9, P11, P13, and P14). Two parents noted the presence of uncomfortable feelings, even if they have not been explicitly expressed (P3 and P7), while two others pointed out ineffective interventions addressing the problem (P4 and P10). Although they could articulate their own definition of conflict, very few parents immediately voiced their concerns upon recognizing a disagreement or uncomfortable feeling with the teachers.

Participants explained that in Korean culture, it is common for parents to suppress their discomfort or disagreements with teachers, leading to missed opportunities for early conflict resolution. This behavior is deeply ingrained in Korea, where teachers are highly esteemed and perceived to hold greater authority than students and parents within traditional educational dynamics (P1, P12, P13). Furthermore, this cultural norm of not openly expressing dissatisfaction or engaging in debates can impede the development of skills necessary for effectively addressing disagreements with teachers' viewpoints (P1, P8, P13, P12, P14).

P11 provided a notable example. Despite experiencing unfair treatment regarding her child, she missed the opportunity to raise concerns or engage in timely discussions with the school, resulting in escalating conflict. P11 observed that the IEP was not effectively implemented as they planned since her child entered middle school. Although she attempted to express her concerns to the teacher, she and her husband made efforts to communicate politely to avoid upsetting the teacher.

During their son's first winter break, P11 received a letter from the due process department of the school district her child is attending indicating that her child had received only 10% of the required special education services. In response, she promptly convened an IEP meeting to address the issue but did not seek legal assistance. At that time, P11 did not fully comprehend the seriousness of the letter, as the concept of IEP due process was unfamiliar to her, given their upbringing in the Korean educational system. During the subsequent IEP meeting, the teachers assured P11 that they would address the issue. However, despite feeling upset and concerned, she chose not to contest teachers' positions. Later, she received two additional letters from the due process department, indicating that her son's services were still

not being adequate provided. Ultimately, P11 decided to hire a lawyer and pursue legal action against the school.

P14 remarked, “In Korean culture, questioning teachers’ statements was uncommon. However, in the U.S., I’ve learned the importance of speaking up.” P1 added, “Growing up, challenging teachers’ authority was unheard of and is deeply rooted in Korean mentality. When my child faced unfair treatment at school, I hesitated to speak up because I was unfamiliar with how to voice objections to teachers. That’s how parent-teacher relationships were managed in Korea.” P7 states, “People say we should advocate for our child. However, it’s quite confusing; I’m unsure of what our child's rights are or when I should speak up. This uncertainty stems from my upbringing, as the concept of special education was not well developed during my childhood. I don’t know when I should feel upset and assert my child’s rights.”

Stage 2: What Exacerbates the Conflict?

Actions and Reactions

Interactions between parents and teachers involve both actions and reactions. Parents often initiate concerns about their child's school experience, making the teacher's flexibility in addressing these issues essential. Many parents reported feelings of helplessness or emotional distress when their concerns were ignored or dismissed by teachers. Some experienced significant exhaustion from repeatedly addressing unresolved issues (P9, P13, P14). Additionally, parents reported experiencing strong emotions such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, anger, and frustration (P4, P8).

As the frequency and duration of parental complaints increased, teachers often responded by avoiding communication or becoming defensive. P4 observed, “The more I demanded, the more my homeroom teacher seemed uncomfortable. During meetings, communication was

nonexistent, like hitting a wall. It felt as if there was no interaction at school." P5, aware of the potential strain on the teacher-parent relationship, made an effort to avoid complaints. To prevent a breakdown in communication, P5 assumed full responsibility for her child's education—covering homework, grades, and test preparation—resulting in overwhelming stress. P5 commented: "When the teacher assigns ten tasks, my child can manage only about three independently. The remaining seven require my assistance. Expressing the difficulty of this situation is also burdensome. If I voiced every challenge, it would become a daily complaint. While sharing my struggles once or twice is acceptable, it ultimately becomes emotionally and physically draining for both of us. Consequently, I end up addressing all the gaps, which overwhelms me."

Parent's actions naturally elicit reactions from teachers. It has been observed that parents quickly recognize the breakdown in timely communication with teachers. However, teachers' proactive interventions regarding the daily challenges parents face while supporting their child's education – such as checking in with parents about whether the assigned homework is appropriate – were not identified in this interview.

Language Barrier and Use of Interpreters

Participants reported that language barriers impeded the development of close relationships with teachers (P7, P11) and complicated their ability to actively request necessary services for their children (P6). They also found it challenging to effectively advocate for their needs or address complaints due to limited language skills (P7, P9). This resulted in additional effort to understand the meeting content and caused increased stress. P11 noted, "Communicating with teachers is difficult because of the language barrier. I must be careful with my word choice and worry whether my expressions are coming across as rude."

Seven parents who used interpreters expressed dissatisfaction with the service. Complaints included interpreters representing the school's position rather than advocating for the parents (P3, P4, P12, P14), or distorting or inadequately conveying the parents' words (P3, P4). P3 commented, "During the IEP meeting, the most contentious issue was the service section. We wanted to have a certain amount of time designated for speech and occupational therapy, but we felt like the interpreter was biased towards the school and did not deliver the parents' perspective. The interpreter kept siding with the school. More importantly, she wasn't fully conveying what we were saying and was altering it a bit. I can hear and understand. It felt like she subtly changed the nuances, which really stood out to me. After experiencing that once or twice, I decided not to use an interpreter anymore."

These parents believed that using interpreters recommended by their spouses, close friends, or acquaintances, rather than school-provided interpreters, was more effective (P3, P4, P6). This approach allowed for pre-meeting discussions, helping interpreters better understand and represent the parents' perspectives, thereby enabling them to advocate effectively for the parents' situations while accurately conveying their words. P4 explained, "School-provided interpreters can sometimes distort the message. However, interpreters I hired personally discussed the meeting with me beforehand, saying things like, 'I plan to address this,' or 'If the school says this, I want to respond with this.' These discussions make it easier for the interpreter to accurately convey my words and help me feel more comfortable during the meeting."

Stage 3: Strategies to Resolve Conflict

Regardless of whether conflicts between parents and teachers were resolved or unresolved, parents employed various strategies to address these conflicts, utilizing all possible means at their disposal.

Transparency and Open Discussion

The findings indicated that when teachers employ transparent problem-solving methods and maintain an honest attitude toward understanding parents' needs—actively resolving conflicts despite potential dissatisfaction with school-related requests—parents not only accept the teachers' suggestions but also develop greater trust in both the teacher and the school. Transparency included instances in which teachers positively addressed parents' demands or the causes of conflict, demonstrating processes of self-change and environmental adaptation (P3, P8, P13).

For example, P3 consistently requested an increase in occupational therapy (OT) service hours at school; however, these requests were not adequately addressed. P3 shared:

"I discovered that the school district lacked sufficient funding to provide occupational therapy services. Nevertheless, the homeroom teacher took the initiative to contact the district multiple times on our behalf. As a result, although somewhat reluctantly, the district conducted an evaluation of our child and arranged for the necessary services. While only a limited amount of time was allocated, the teachers clearly explained the process for acquiring these services. In retrospect, although the duration of the services was notably short, we did not feel unfairly treated."

Similarly, there were instances where teachers understood parents' perspectives, openly discussed the child's characteristics, and actively engaged in problem-solving (P4, P5, P13). For instance, P13 recalled:

"During my child's first and second grades, the teacher was candid in her communication with me. She said, 'It has been challenging to address this aspect of your child, so could you lend a hand?' This allowed me to engage more actively in classroom activities. As parents, we have a

clear understanding of our child, so there is no need for excessive praise or to sugarcoat the situation (laughs)."

Compromise

In this study, instances were found where teachers took on the role of persuading parents, rather than fully accommodating or rejecting their demands, in an effort to compromise and resolve conflicts caused by discrepancies between teachers and parents regarding the services the school had provided for the student (P3, P4, P5, P9). These parents engaged in a process of evaluating the logic of the teacher's explanations, ultimately agreeing to the alternatives proposed by the teachers, thereby resolving the conflicts. In these cases, teachers accepted the parents' opinions, while parents also acknowledged the teachers' perspectives, leading to a mutual compromise from the parents' point of view. P5 remarked, "Even if [the problem] isn't completely resolved, we need to compromise to some extent. Both I and the teacher need to make some concessions."

P9 emphasized that parents should prioritize listening to the teacher's explanations rather than insistently holding onto their own demands, stating, "It's not about accepting all of the teacher's suggestions. What the teacher says might be valid. Parents should evaluate whether the teacher's reasoning is sound. If it is, then it is essential to consider their perspective."

The findings indicate that the assessments provided by the school helped parents gain an objective view of their child's situation. P3 noted, "When we transferred to this school, there were differing expectations between the teachers and me regarding our child. There was a disagreement about placing our child in the resource room; I believed our child was doing well, but the teachers felt full inclusion would be challenging. In the end, we conducted a full evaluation, which revealed that our child was not keeping up with grade level (laughs). The

teacher's observations within the school system clarified that I did not fully understand the system." P3 had only observed her child in the context of receiving support at home and was unaware of the child's need to interact with others (i.e., teachers and peers), adhere to the school schedule and rules, and manage unstructured events at school. The assessment results revealed to P3 that her young child required more intensive support in school and social settings than she had initially realized. This insight helped bridge the gap in perspectives between the teacher and parents regarding the child's inclusion and placement plan.

Using Advocates Is Not in Our Culture

Participants preferred to seek assistance from acquaintances or their children's therapists rather than hiring trained professional advocates or special education lawyers during the conflict. Among the 14 parents, three hired professional advocates (i.e., special education lawyers) Of these three parents, one had been involved in lawsuits with the school, and another had previously considered legal action, necessitating the assistance of lawyers. The third parent worked collaboratively with a lawyer, not necessarily in the context of a lawsuit, to better advocate for their child in IEP meetings and to address various incidents involving their child at school.

Seven participants used ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) therapists, social workers, and private tutors as advocates to support the child and family in the IEP meeting or when communicating with teachers. Three parents had not sought assistance from trained professionals or other personnel. Participants who attended the meeting without an advocate or who used ABA therapists or private tutors as their advocates mostly lacked information or understanding about professional advocates or special education lawyers (P3, P4). This was due to cultural influences in Korea, where concepts such as litigation, lawyers, and professional advocates are not familiar

to many. P3 stated that hiring lawyers or advocates was an unfamiliar culture for Koreans, and P4 considered bringing advocates or lawyers to the school to be exceptional or unusual behavior. Rather, interpreters hired by the parents, rather than the school, may have also acted in an advocacy role. They believed that hiring advocates or lawyers in situations of disagreement with teachers or schools, such as in IEP meetings or conflict situations, should only be done when the conflict is very serious or when it might lead to litigation. Moreover, these participants thought that litigation could never be helpful for the child's education, believing that even if they were to litigate, the chances of winning were low, and it would likely worsen the situation.

Silence of the Weak

More than half of the participants (P1, P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P11, P13) noted that their children lacked independence at school, emphasizing the significant role their relationship with teachers played in their child's school performance. Children with disabilities often rely on the support of teachers, paraprofessionals, or other school personnel, and the parents believed that maintaining positive relationships with teachers enabled them to gain valuable insights into their child's school life. Deteriorating relationships between teachers and parents ultimately resulted in children losing an important support system that they could trust and rely on at school. P3 stated: "Honestly, parents of special needs children are thoroughly vulnerable... if there's an issue with the homeroom teacher or special education teacher, our child might end up not being liked or cared for by the teacher. Children's school lives are heavily reliant on teachers."

Many parents feared that if they maintained an uncomfortable relationship with teachers while their children attended that school, the biggest victims would be the children. This fear deterred parents from voicing their dissatisfaction with the school. P11 noted, "It weighed heavily on my heart to keep my child in that school amid trouble with the teachers. I was afraid

my child might become the one the teachers hate." Similarly, P6 stated, "If our child continues attending school and the teachers have their own network, they could speak negatively about our child somewhere. Then our child could end up with a tarnished reputation."

Moving

In effort to avoid conflict, the decision to relocate was made in eight cases (see Table 2). Two of these had moved twice due to conflicts. One participant, not included in those eight, was seriously considering relocating at the time of the interview. As previously mentioned, the participants believed that an uncomfortable relationship with teachers would have negative implications for their children's education. Some preferred relocation over hiring professional advocates or lawyers due to the high associated costs of the latter. Of the eight participants, two had to change jobs or live separately from their spouses, yet they opted to move to school districts that offered more services for their children, and they were mostly satisfied with these decisions.

The majority chose to relocate before serious conflicts arose with teachers explicitly while acknowledging the conflicts implicitly. The parents who chose to move mentioned broken trust and believed that open conversation with teachers was already impossible (P11, P14). P 11 said "[Through that incident,] I learned that a teacher can decide a child's placement according to their own preferences. Although the problem itself was resolved, I still had a negative impression of those teachers, and it led to distrust toward the entire school."

Stage 4: What Remains and the Aftermath of Conflict

Empowerment: Becoming a True Partner

Regardless of whether the conflict was resolved, many parents learned how to negotiate and communicate with the teacher and the school, gaining a position to intervene in their child's

education from a more equal standpoint to teachers. Many parents previously understood advocating for their child as confronting teachers; hence, conflict avoidance strategies were observed. However, participants acknowledged that by expressing their disagreements with teachers and working toward resolution, they learned to handle conflicts calmly and adaptively, which they considered a positive aspect of conflicts.

Some participants noted that prior to the conflict, parental opinions were passively reflected in significant decision-making regarding services for children due to language and cultural differences. However, after the conflict, teachers began to pay more attention to parental opinions to form a stronger collaborative relationship with them (P3, P4, P11, P12). P3 stated, "Before the conflict, it seemed like the teachers didn't know much about our family. Even though my English is still not fluent, it seems like teachers have realized that we are not ignorant people. They have become more aware of us actively getting involved in our child's issues, so they pay more attention to our family and my son."

Half the participants believed that their conflict experiences with teachers had a positive impact on their relationships with the school afterward. These examples included: 1) Participants no longer had vague fears about expressing differing opinions to teachers after the conflict was resolved (P2, P3, P11, P12, P13); 2) Communication with teachers shifted from emotional to more rational (P11); 3) The process of escalating conflict prompted reflection on their own immature handling and led to considering better responses (P7); 4) They learned effective ways to communicate their opinions to teachers (P7); and 5) they found the most suitable conflict resolution resources for themselves among the various options (P4).

The Meaning of "Good Teacher" for Parents: Professionalism vs. Compassionate

In this study, participants described deep contemplation of the most critical aspects of their child's school experience when encountering conflicts with teachers. These reflections led them to consider what they desired from teachers to promote the well-being of their child in the school community and what qualities were essential for teachers to effectively support children with special needs. Many participants emphasized that, more than expertise in special education or professional demeanor, the most important quality for teachers working with special needs children was a compassionate attitude.

P12 believed that a good teacher should be able to consider the unseen difficulties that arise among typical children in an inclusive classroom. P10 remarked, "In the case of our child, who has behavioral issues, there's dignity for the child and peer attention to consider. I respect those who delicately approach these aspects and work confidentially on the child's weaknesses." Other participants wished to see in teachers a commitment to their own educational philosophy, not treating school as merely a place for curriculum delivery but striving for the child's growth in all respects (i.e., emotional, physical, and academic) at school. P13 said, "Our child has been academically behind for about three years now, but we don't want the teacher to just push them to catch up to the grade level. We want a teacher who can assure us that our child is not wasting those 6–7 hours at school, but is actually learning something... that's what's important."
All participants in the interview stated that regardless of their child's age and grade level, the most significant concern for them when their child changed grade levels was which teacher would become their child's homeroom teacher. They explained that this was because the attitude or disposition of the teacher most closely involved with the child had the greatest and most direct impact on their child's school life. Only one participant (P4) mentioned expertise in autism or subject areas as an important quality of teachers.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study examines cases of conflict between KA parents of children with autism and teachers, modeling the conflict resolution process (Figure 1). The figure outlines four stages in a conflict, specifically focusing on situations involving children with autism. Each stage identifies the causes of the conflict, what exacerbates it, strategies for resolution, and the aftermath. Additionally, the model considers cultural influences on conflict resolution processes, such as language barriers, teacher-parent relationships in Korean culture, and the use of interpreters and advocates.

Causes of Daily Conflict

Daily conflicts between parents and teachers often remain subtle and may not be immediately apparent. This study has documented how these minor frictions can later escalate into more significant conflicts within the educational context. The causes or conditions leading to conflict fall into three primary categories: child behavior, teacher behavior, and parent behavior. Notably, parent behavior was described less frequently compared to child and teacher behavior (See Table 3). This is understandable, given that all study participants are parents themselves, which likely necessitates more self-censored responses to the issues. Characteristics of the child's autism, such as deficits in social cues, aggressive behavior, and anxiety, frequently served as catalysts for conflicts with teachers. Children with autism often display behaviors—such as anxiety in response to changes in routine, high sensitivity to noise, crowds, and sensory stimuli, impatient behaviors that arise from difficulties in understanding concepts of time and abstract thinking, and inappropriate behaviors due to challenges in reading social cues – that may be interpreted as physically aggressive by their peers (e.g., a taekwondo demonstration).

Additionally, when these children experience difficulties with verbal communication, conveying their intentions becomes even more complex. Parents hope that the various challenges stemming from their children's autistic traits to be understood and adequately supported within the school setting. However, when educators or school authorities perceive these behaviors as detrimental to classroom management or as posing a threat to other students, they may feel obligated to implement measures regarding the autistic child's behavior. This response can lead parents to feel that their child is being treated unjustly—such as through separation from peers—potentially serving as a catalyst for further conflict. Additionally, the ineffectiveness of teachers in addressing behavior problems associated with students' autism emerged as the primary factor contributing to conflicts between teachers and parents. Moreover, when a child has limited verbal abilities, parents often experience heightened anxiety and concern regarding incidents involving their child at school.

Investigating how subtle disruptions in the relationship—prompted by children's behavioral issues and teachers' attitudes or responses—can escalate into more significant conflicts sets this study apart from existing research, which typically focuses on conflicts involving legal actions (Yell et al., 2005) or disputes related to IEP meetings concerning service hours or delivery methods (Trainor & Kim, 2007). The importance of addressing conflicts early and collaboratively in a school setting has been stressed. Understanding how school personnel informally address conflicts can foster collaboration and help find common ground between home and school before the situation escalates (Mueller & Piantoni, 2013).

Cultural and Linguistic Aspects in Conflict Resolution

Existing literature on teacher-parent conflicts in the education of children with disabilities predominantly reflects Western perspectives (Attanucci, 2004; Mueller et al., 2008; Saltmarsh &

McPherson, 2019) and tends to overlook culturally diverse populations. This study addresses this gap by examining the perspectives of immigrant parents of children with autism in the U.S., a context that differs significantly from traditional Western cultural frameworks.

The study reaffirmed how cultural differences and linguistic barriers can exacerbate conflicts between parents and teachers (Li, 2006; McCarthy, 2010). In many Asian cultures, there is a tendency to engage in socially desirable responses to preserve harmonious relationships (Lalwani et al., 2006). This pattern is attributed to the cultural dynamics prevalent in the teacher-parent relationship in Korea (Cho & Lee, 2019; Jung, 2021; Kim, 2006 Lee et al., 2014; Park, 2018). This cultural inclination can lead to a delayed expression of parental dissatisfaction, which may result in increased tension or defensive reactions from teachers. Specifically, participants in this study hesitated to openly address concerns regarding inadequate school services or perceived unfair treatment of their child with teachers, primarily due to the high regard for teacher authority prevalent in Korean culture. In regard to family's right in special education, participants often struggled to distinguish between discussing their child's rights and challenging the authority of those teachers (P11, P1). Additionally, individuals who were raised in environments where the special education system was not structured similarly to that in the U.S. found it difficult to clearly define the extent of their child's rights and felt uncertain about how to effectively advocate for them (P7).

Another key finding relates to the use of interpreters during the conflict resolution process. Interpreting should involve more than a mere word-for-word translation; it requires a thorough understanding of the content to convey the meaning clearly to the listener (Gonzalez & O'Neill, 2012). As the complexity of the content increases, interpreters must possess through knowledge of the speaker's background, context, and intent (Angelelli, 2004). Many sources

emphasize that, during IEP meetings, interpreters need to comprehend both the child's disability and the parents' educational needs, as well as be aware of the resources available from teachers and schools (Baker et al., 2010; Giles & McKinlay, 2014; Meyer & Kline, 2013). However, participants noted that interpreters provided by the school district often met the parents for the first time on the day of the IEP meeting, resulting in an insufficient understanding of the parents' perspectives. Additionally, participants observed that interpreters tended to align with the teachers' or school's perspective rather than adequately representing the parents' voices, which hindered the parents' ability to advocate effectively for their child's needs during the meeting.

Participants in this study are first-generation immigrants who are not fully acculturated and have limited access to the U.S. educational system and face language constraints. Therefore, the role of the interpreter provided by the school district should extend beyond mere translation, and it is crucial that interpreters facilitate full inclusion for parents in the IEP process (Gonzalez & Lunde, 2017; Kirkpatrick & McCormick, 2015). Research consistently highlights that the service delivery mechanism presents multiple barriers to locating and using services (Baker et al., 2010). Specifically, educational systems frequently lack effective strategies to address language and cultural barriers (French et al., 2009). Structural barriers, such as limited English proficiency and the use of low-quality interpreters, can restrict access to appropriate care.

Dynamics of Parent-Teacher During Conflict Resolution Process

In Stage 2, the study examines the dynamics of interactions and responses between parents and teachers. Participants indicated that when parents persistently advocate for their child's needs, teachers may exhibit reluctance to engage or adopt a defensive posture. Consequently, as the conflict intensifies, communication becomes unidirectional, predominantly driven by the parents. According to Saltmarsh and McPherson (2022), schools may implement

strategies that impede reciprocal communication to reinforce their own position. Parents are astute in recognizing these tactics, which exacerbates the existing rift with teachers or the school, ultimately leading to obstructed communication. While this study does not quantify the frequency or intensity of parental demands, the observations suggest that teachers may exert substantial control over the communication process between parents and educators.

When conflict arises between parents and teachers while their children with autism are attending school, significant psychological strain on parents, impacts their coping mechanism (Davis & Carter, 2008). Participants noted that, given the necessity of seeking assistance for a child's disability at school, parents perceive their child's position as weak or vulnerable. Under such circumstances, parents may view silence or transferring their child to a different school as the most viable or prudent option. Similar scenarios have been documented in previous research (Saltmarsh & McPherson, 2022). The primary motivation for parental conflict with teachers is to secure a better educational environment for their children. Paradoxically, this study revealed a prevailing consensus that parental dissent against school decisions tends to adversely affect their children's welfare. Schools embroiled in conflict with parents frequently fail to address procedures designed to protect students (e.g., teacher replacement and class selection options), casting doubt on the claim that such conflict serves the best interests of the child.

Successful Conflict Resolution Strategies

In Stage 3, examples of effective conflict resolution emerged. A recurring report was the teachers' commitment to transparent and open communication. Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective communication between teachers and parents enhances parental satisfaction with the school and is a crucial factor in resolving conflicts (Attanucci, 2004; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Wang, 2014) Specifically, transparent communication is widely recognized in

the literature as essential for resolving conflicts, underscoring the importance of fostering effective dialogue between teachers and parents. These studies maximizing opportunities for teacher-parent interactions through collaborative participation in student education and creating environments that promote dialogue between parents and teachers. This study reaffirms that teachers who honestly share the range and limitations of available resources and maintain open communication contribute significantly to problem-solving and successful service delivery.

Proactive Approach to Conflict Resolution

The principle of "Intervene at the lowest level" (Mueller & Piantoni, 2013) advocates addressing issues or conflicts at the earliest and most fundamental stage to achieve successful conflict resolution. This approach seeks to prevent disputes from escalating into more serious problems. However, the current study reveals that conflicts originate internally before they become apparent on the surface. By the time conflicts become visible, significant distrust has already accumulated between parents and teachers, complicating the identification and optimal timing for early intervention. Furthermore, existing research offers limited examples of successfully resolving the deep-seated distrust that accumulates between parents and teachers. This study indicates that once conflicts emerge, both parents and teachers tend to become emotionally charged and may avoid direct contact with one another.

The study highlights the importance of using an advocate at the appropriate time rather than focusing solely on the timing for resolving conflicts. Cases involving that parents experienced minimal conflict suggest that proactive strategies can be effective. For instance, these parents often engaged advocates from the initial meeting with the school, clearly articulated their positions, and reached agreements on all matters. One participant, who had experienced several conflicts and had relocated schools, specifically recommended hiring an

attorney before conflicts arose, noting that this approach had successfully prevented further conflicts at a new school.

Many studies emphasize the importance of developing parental advocacy skills. This research suggests that to minimize conflicts with schools, advocacy skills should ideally be cultivated before engaging in direct negotiations. For parents who lack sufficient advocacy skills, particularly those from culturally diverse backgrounds, early intervention by an advocate appears to be crucial.

Reflection of a Good Teacher

Research indicates that the school participation rates of culturally diverse parents are significantly lower compared to those of parents from the dominant culture (Kroeger & O'Toole, 2016). The conflict resolution process also reveals additional challenges due to language barriers, culturally different expression methods, unfamiliarity with advocacy, and insufficient systems. Parents participating in this study identified qualities such as the personal character, compassionate attitude, or mindset toward disabilities of individual teachers as important traits of a good teacher for their children. Different from previous research on the effect of teacher quality, such as teacher credentials, degree levels, and certificate status (Xu & Gulosino, 2006), this paper reflects the reality that, in situations where expecting help from the system is lacking, parents are compelled to rely on the personal qualities of individual teachers for their children's education.

The current study advocates for a re-evaluation of existing policies and practices to ensure equitable access to school services for culturally diverse families. It also emphasizes the need for research into providing structured and systemic support mechanisms, aiming to lessen the reliance on individual teachers' personal attributes for the education of children with autism.

Implications and Limitations

Parents are essential stakeholders in their children's education; thus, their demands must be valued and reflected in educational practices. The current study explores the conflict resolution process between parents of autistic children and their children's teachers, focusing on Korean American parents' perspectives. In addition, qualitative grounded theory provides a data collection and analysis framework. The main reason for choosing this method was that there is a lack of previous research in this area, particularly from the viewpoint of culturally diverse families. Consequently, there is insufficient information on potential variables and alternatives of study examinations. The conflict resolution theory derived from this study can provide fundamental information when conducting similar research topics using quantitative and qualitative approaches.

This study observed a behavioral pattern in which parents, concerned about the potential negative impacts on their children, refrain from expressing their complaints toward schools. Notably, in the case of children with disabilities, parents often feel compelled to rely on the assistance of teachers and school personnel, leading them to choose silence or avoidance over voicing their concerns. There is a pressing need for in-depth research on preventive measures to protect both children and parents from adverse consequences when conflicts arise between parents and teachers. Numerous studies have identified effective communication between parents and teachers as a crucial element in conflict resolution. However, communication skills are closely linked to cultural backgrounds, and institutional support is essential for parents with language barriers to communicate effectively with teachers. For instance, the use of professionally trained interpreters is of paramount importance. Systematic research in this area is warranted. Current conflict resolution models predominantly focus on school- or teacher-led

approaches, which tend to position parents as passive service consumers, thereby limiting their active participation. Therefore, it is essential to explore new models that empower parents to take a proactive role in preventing conflicts with teachers. Such research is expected to contribute to the development of a healthier educational environment through collaboration between parents and teachers.

This study focuses primarily on the dynamics arising from conflicts between parents and teachers regarding children's education and services, complaints about the educational environment, and cultural dissonance. It analyzes the interactions and dynamics that emerge from these conflicts, including case studies of their actions and reactions and reflections on these in the conclusions. However, the study places less emphasis on the "student's perspective" and how the student, as a key educational stakeholder, is positioned and managed in the context of conflicts between parents and teachers. Moving forward, further research is needed to examine the educational, emotional, psychological, and practical impacts that such conflicts may have on children, who are direct beneficiaries and recipients of special education services, and how these tensions between parents and teachers may affect their education.

The conflict resolution process model theorized in this study will likely contribute to the establishment of preventive systems and policies for teacher–parent conflicts in the future. Specifically, when conflicts arise between parents and teachers, the results of this study can be used as preliminary data to establish a mediation system (or procedure) that can resolve conflicts within the school. Such a conflict resolution model will further contribute to reducing the social costs (e.g., due process hearing) caused by the exacerbation of conflict and positioning schools as democratic spaces for sound dialogue and compromise, rather than a place for confrontation with parents.

This study employs a small number of participants (i.e., 14 participants) and exclusively utilizes semi-structured interviews to collect cases of conflict. The selection of a specific participant group not only limits the generalizability of the findings but also presents challenges in achieving broader applicability. To enhance the generalizability of the study's results, methodological improvements such as surveys or observations involving parents from diverse backgrounds are essential. Given that the study presents the conflict process from the parents' perspective, future research could benefit from involving teachers as informants to collect and analyze conflict cases, thereby deepening our understanding of the bidirectional nature of conflicts within culturally and linguistically diverse families.

The research conducts in-depth interviews with Korean American participants who reflect on their experiences of conflicts with teachers as their children with autism navigate school life. Rather than addressing the challenges or reflections encountered by each parent at various stages of conflict, the focus is placed on significant experiences as participants recall salient memories from their current perspective.

Despite efforts to explore the phenomena of parent-teacher conflicts and model them based on grounded theory, this study acknowledges limitations in systematically generating theoretical frameworks from the research outcomes. Consequently, further endeavors in this area are suggested as directions for future research.

Table 1. Participants' characteristics

Participants	Participants' Age	Language at home	Year of immigration	Highest level of education	Income	Child's gender	Child's age	Level of spoken language	Child's Placement at School
P1	49	Korean & English	15	Graduate	100,000 +	F	14	Significant delay in spoken language	Specialized Unit
P2	41	Korean	17	Graduate	100,000 +	M	8	More than 2 years of spoken language delay	Full Inclusion
P3	39	Korean & English	6	Graduate	20,000-39,000	M	9	More than 2 years of spoken language delay	Specialized Unit
P4	50	Korean	19	High school diploma	Not answering	F	15	Minimal verbal	Private Special School
P5	44	Korean & English	22	Undergraduate	Not answering	M	13	More than 2 years of spoken language delay	Specialized Unit
P6	46	Korean & English	10	Undergraduate	100,000 +	M	13	More than 2 years of spoken language delay	Resource Room
P7	44	Korean	12	Graduate	60,000-79,999	M	8	Significant delay in language	Resource Room
P8	43	Korean	20	Undergraduate	100,000 +	M	6	Significant delay in language	Resource Room
P9	47	Korean & English	21	Graduate	100,000 +	M	13	Pragmatic language difficulty	Full Inclusion
P10	42	Korean & English	10	Graduate	100,000 +	M	9	Pragmatic language difficulty	Full Inclusion
P11	44	Korean & English	16	Graduate	80,000+	M	14	Pragmatic language difficulty	Full Inclusion
P12	53	Korean & English	27	Graduate	100,000 +	M	9	Pragmatic language difficulty	Full Inclusion
P13	36	English	12	Undergraduate	100,000 +	F	13	Pragmatic language difficulty	Partial Pull Out
P14	42	Korean & English	14	Undergraduate	100,000 +	M	13	Significant delay in spoken language	Partial Pull Out

Table 2. Use of Resources and Moving Experience

Participants	Number of Major Conflict	Use of Interpreter	Use of Advocate	Number of Moving Because of the Conflict
P1	3	No	ABA therapist Private tutor	No
P2	2	No	Friends	1
P3	5	Yes, but not anymore	ABA therapist	1
P4	More than 5 times	Yes, but not anymore	ABA therapist	2
P5	1	No	ABA therapist Speech therapist	No, but seriously considered
P6	1	Yes, but not anymore	BCBA Former public-school teacher	1
P7	2	Yes	Social worker	1
P8	More than 5 times	No	No	No, but preparing to move at the time of interview
P9	1	No	No	No
P10	1	No	ABA therapist Social worker	No
P11	1	Yes, but not anymore	Special education lawyer Psychologist	No
P12	1	Yes, but not anymore	No	No
P13	3	No	Special education lawyer	1
P14	More than 3 times	Yes, but not anymore	Special education lawyer Speech therapist Special Education Professor	2

Note. Number of Major Conflicts refers to the number of instances identified by the participant as conflict with teachers.

Table 3. Participants' experience at different stage

	Stage 1				Stage 2		Stage 3					Stage 4	
	Child Behavior	Teacher Behavior	Parent Behavior	Cultural Context	Action &Reaction	Use of Interpreter	Transparency/ Open Discussion	Compromise	Use of Advocate	Silence	Moving	Empowerment	Good Teacher
P1	O		O	O					O	O			
P2	O	O							O	O	O	O	
P3	O	O	O			O	O	O	O	O	O	O	
P4	O	O	O		O	O	O	O	O		O	O	O
P5		O			O		O	O	O	O			
P6	O	O				O				O	O		O
P7		O				O			O	O	O	O	
P8		O		O	O		O						O
P9			O		O	O		O					
P10									O				O
P11		O				O			O	O		O	
P12		O	O	O		O						O	O
P13		O		O	O		O		O	O	O	O	O
P14	O	O	O	O	O	O			O		O		

Figure 1. Conflict Resolution Process

Stage 1 Cause of Conflict	**Stage 2** What Exacerbates the Conflict?	**Stage 3** Strategies to Solve Conflict	**Stage 4** Aftermath of Conflict
Student Behavior - Autism-related traits become a point of contention between parents and teachers - Teacher Behavior - Teachers were not effectively addressing issues related to their children - Parent Behavior - Overconcern and excessive involvement in a child' education - Lack of understanding of the child's disability and support needs	Action and Reaction - A cycle of negative actions and reactions - Parent concerns lead to emotional distress - Teacher responses defensively or avoiding communication	What Resolves Conflict? - Transparency & Open Discussion - Compromise: Both the teacher and the parents make small concessions to each other's viewpoints What Unresolve Conflict? - Moving: In efforts to avoid conflict, the decision to relocate was made - Silence of the weak: Parents of children with disabilities avoid confrontation, believing they need the teacher's help	Empowerment - Becoming a true partner - Build collaborative relationship Qualities of a Good Teacher - A good teacher considers unseen difficulties and teats each child with dignity
Teacher-parent relation in Korean culture	Language barrier & use of interpreter	Using advocate is not in our culture	Lower school participation dependence on individual teachers
CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON EACH STAGE			

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Conflict Resolution Process
PARENTS/ CAREGIVERS

Interviewer:

# of interview attempt:

Date of interview:

Start time:

End time:

Interview type:
Zoom In-person Phone

Contacting the interviewee & interview setting:

Introductory Questions

- Can you tell me about yourself?
- In general, what do you find your relationship with the teachers (either general or special education teachers) who are working with your children to be like?
- In general, how does communication with teachers take place (e.g., email, 1:1 meeting, phone call)?
- Are you comfortable communicating with teachers? Why do you think that is/is not the case?
- Do you think you understand your child's school system properly? Why do you think so?
- Please let me know if any incidents or episodes have occurred due to cultural differences with teachers (regardless of whether or not they have involved conflict).

  - Can you tell me about the teacher?
  - How long they have taught your child?
  - What was her/his cultural background (i.e., race/ethnicity)?

Acknowledging the conflict

- Can you explain the incident that you believe to be a conflict with a teacher or teachers?
- What was your relationship with the teacher/s like before the conflict?
- How or when did you acknowledge (identify) the conflict, and what did you consider to be its root causes?
- How did you feel when you recognized the conflict with the teacher/s?

Conflict development/ management

- Were there any events (incidents) that exacerbated or alleviated the conflict?
  - What made the conflict to escalate or alleviate?
  - How did you react when you felt the conflict was escalating?
  - How did you react when you felt that the conflict was being alleviated?
- How did you deal with the conflict?

- What have you tried, what worked, and what didn't work?
- How do you define effective conflict management, if any?

♦ Have you advocated for you or your children?
- What were your difficulties in advocating for your children or yourself? Why?

♦ How did you get information or help in resolving conflict (or disagreement) with teachers?

♦ What types of [cultural and social] resources/information do you perceive to be necessary to advocate for your children or yourself?
- How do you verify whether such resources/information are/is valid?

♦ Did you or the teacher do anything to alleviate the conflict?

♦ What type of services, information, or resources have been the most beneficial in resolving conflict, if any?

Conflict resolution/ aftermath

♦ Has the conflict between you and the teacher been resolved?
- if yes, how was the conflict resolved?
- If not, why do you think it hasn't been resolved?

♦ How do you perceive the consequences (aftermath) of the conflict?
- What was the impact on your involvement in your child's education?
- How has your relationship with the teacher changed since the conflict?
- Are there any concerns about the conflict or the way it was handled?
- What do you think are the positive effects of experiencing conflict resolution with the teacher?
- What do you think are the detrimental consequences of the conflict with the teacher?

♦ Has there been a change in how you think about conflict with teachers as you have gone through the series of events?

♦ Is there anything you would like to say to parents who are experiencing conflict?

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