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## Overcoming Stress: A Phenomenological Study of Field Missionaries Rescuing North Korean Defectors

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### Abstract

*In this study, the stress and experience of overcoming stress by on-site missionaries who rescue North Korean defectors was investigated in depth through a phenomenological approach. To this end, 7 missionaries with more than 5 years of experience in North Korean missionary mission were selected, and in-depth interviews and written interviews were conducted once. The collected data were analyzed through the phenomenological research methods of Giorgi and Colaizzi. The results were categorized into 'calling and obedience', 'mission and stress', 'anxiety situation and stress', 'stress situation and frustration', 'stress experience and psychological change', 'self insight and overcoming stress', 'resolution and recovery of stress', and 'new determination and rededication'. By researching and analyzing the stress and stress experience of the missionaries who rescue North Korean defectors in the field, this study has significance for helping missionaries continue to help them through managing and overcoming their stress.*

**Keywords:** Phenomenology, North Korean Defectors, North Korean Defector Rescue Mission, Stress

## 1. Introduction

The missionaries who rescue defectors from North Korea are dropping out of their mission field due to psychological and environmental crisis. This phenomenon seems to be related to the stress experienced by missionaries. Through this study, the researcher intends to examine the contents of the stress experienced during the rescue mission, the psychological structure caused by the stress, and the fundamental resources to overcome the stress.

## 2. Theoretical Understanding

### 2.1 North Korean Defectors and Missionaries to Rescue North Korean Refugees

North Korean defectors are called "northern refugees" or "new settlers" (saeteomin). It refers to those who were born in North Korea and immigrated to Korea after gaining the refugee status, either because they chose to be on a political exile or escaped from North Korea in order to be free from political oppression and move into the democratic system [1]. North Korea's currency reform in 1992 and the mass starvation that began in 1994 since the death of Kim Il-sung made people cross the border. In March 2020, the Ministry of Unification estimated that there are more than 33,000 North Korean defectors living in South Korea, who left North Korea for varied reasons, such as to gain sustainable livelihood or to achieve their dreams. The main causes of North

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Korean defection were the blocking of the central distribution system after Kim Il-sung's death, dissatisfaction with the system, infringements of human rights, and the impact of the Korean Wave.

As of 1992, formal diplomatic relations were established between Korea and China, and Korean churches sent missionaries to China to begin missionary work, using northeastern Samsung region as the mission strategic point. Naturally, it became a point of contact with the large number of North Korean defectors. After the establishment of diplomatic relations, the missionaries provided food, business funds, or goods, and sent them back to the North after preaching them the gospel. However, as more and more people wanted to come to Korea over time, the missionaries started to teach the Bible while the North Koreans stayed at a safe house near the Sino-Korean border for at least three to four days, and then guide them across the border to Southeast Asia through the Kunming region in southern China. This was the early form of missionary work for North Korean defectors. Missionaries' work now includes picking up and taking North Korean defectors directly across the border, and operating a shelter where North Korean defectors can hide temporarily. Rescuers in the shelter provide food and shelter for North Korean defectors. They also preach the gospel and cover the defectors' travel expenses, and help them pass through the border safely.

## **2.2 Stress and the Stressful Situations Missionaries Experience at the Scene of Rescue**

The origin of stress comes from the Latin word "Stringer" which means "extensive tightening." It was used in the 17th century to indicate 'difficulty', 'hardship', and 'trouble', but in the 18th century took on the meaning of 'force', 'pressure' and 'physical pressure' [2]. Stress refers to resistance against deformation caused by physical objects or external forces affecting human body organs or mental strength, which enables them to return to their original state and maintain integration [3]. The concept of stress, first introduced by Austrian biologist Hans Selye, used the physiological response of stress to mean 'pressure' mainly used in physics [4]. Kim Eun-mi defined stress as a general reaction in the body and stated that it is not just a neurologic tension, but something to avoid, or something that is always experienced as unpleasant [5]. Under the given stress stimuli, not everyone undergoes the same symptom and each individual may or may not have the resource to overcome stress. The absence of the resource is bound to cause emotional and physical problems [6]. Ryu Jong-hoon states that stress-causing factors include deficiency, frustration, overburden, conflict, etc., and that deficiency is caused by the deprivation of means or methods to address an individual's inner needs. The sense of deficiency can be reduced by caring for those who are in a more difficult situation than themselves [7]. Frustration refers to the dysfunctional emotional state experienced when self-determined goals are not met, due to the situations such as natural disasters, traffic jams, religious or socioeconomic factors, and social class discrimination. Excessive burden indicates stress experienced when trying to maximize work ability within a given time to achieve effective results, mainly observed in high school seniors, or those who are looking for employments. This includes mental illness, suicidal thoughts, and weakened physical immunity [7]. In addition, situation of conflict is a complex psychological condition in which one can either grow or fall behind, depending on how they are overcome the given situation. People with positive tendencies can overcome the moment of crisis through self-examination, while those with negative ways of thinking might avoid interpersonal relationships and isolate oneself as a way to avoid problems [7].

Most of the stress experienced by missionaries at the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors falls within the above four categories, with minor variations. Based on the four stress models of Ryu Jong-hoon, they first face considerable difficulties due to the "deficiency" that comes from interpersonal disconnection. Secondly, the frustration-type stress experienced by missionaries is accompanied by anxiety and fear. In the process of rescuing North Korean defectors, unexpected events are bound to happen, with the spot checks at random time and place and the tense atmosphere at the shelter. Third, they cannot be free from heavy work stress. Finally, they are continuously exposed in the midst of conflicts. For example, serious conflicts arise when women who have formed families in China decide to go to Korea, which presents such difficult situation that one starts questioning one's identity as a missionary. This study is aimed at helping the missionaries carry out their ministry work in a healthy way by finding out what their work stresses are and how they can be overcome. Unlike the precedent researches that focus on North Korean defectors, this research focuses on the missionaries

who carry out the rescue mission and the stress-relieving process of the missionaries on the rescue sites.

### 3. Research Methods

#### 3.1 Phenomenological Research Method

Phenomenology, one of the five themes of qualitative research methods, is a research method that can deeply understand the intrinsic nature of human beings. It is a science that explores the essential structure of consciousness, and is defined as a field of study that is most required in order to intuitively comprehend the essence of phenomena [8]. Phenomenology also highlights phenomena as human experience with subjective meanings, and analyzes how individuals interpret and explain phenomena, and identify the causes, reasons, and meanings behind those interpretations by using scientific approaches. Phenomenological studies can reduce prejudice on the part of researcher by using parentheses before coding data, and concentrate on the actual experience of the participants [8]. This study was based on Giorgi's phenomenological research methodology and used the Colazzi method to form a common set of topics for the entire participants. While retaining the personal sides of each account of the participants, the overall experience was integrated into the general structure.

#### 3.2 Research Problems

- 1) What is the stress experience of missionaries at the rescue site for North Korean defectors?
- 2) What is the structure of psychological phenomena in the experience of missionaries at the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors?
- 3) How have missionaries at the rescue site overcome stress?

#### 3.3 Selection and Characteristics of Research Participants

The researchers selected participants for the study on the following criteria:

- 1) Those who were officially selected and sent to the mission while retaining their orthodox Christian beliefs.
- 2) Missionaries with more than five years of experience in China and Southeast Asia.
- 3) To collect data, the missionaries have to belong to a certain North Korean missionary organization.

**Table 1. Personal information for interviewee**

Participant	Religion	Age	Gender
Missionary 1	Christianity	55	Man
Missionary 2	Christianity	49	Woman
Missionary 3	Christianity	34	Man
Missionary 4	Christianity	52	Woman
Missionary 5	Christianity	47	Woman
Missionary 6	Christianity	36	Woman
Missionary 7	Christianity	43	Woman

#### 3.4 Ethical Considerations in the Research Process

By checking with the participants whether the statements made by the participants match the previous ones, we improved the reliability of the study. By repeatedly analyzing the statements of the study participants until

no new concepts were derived, we could achieve greater consistency in the result. In addition, we obtained prior consent from participants in the research through documents before any in-depth interview. They were free to discontinue their participation in the research during the process, and the confidentiality of their stories was guaranteed [9]. In particular, the names of the transcription books were all anonymous. We promised the participants that the record will only be used for academic purposes, and made sure that the expenses for their effort were rightly paid.

### 3.5 Methods and Procedures for Data Collection

In collecting data, a semi-structured open questionnaire [10] was used in our in-depth interviews. It lasted from 50 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the answers of the participants. If necessary, the questionnaires were aptly modified during the interview. When more information was required, additional questions were asked later in a written form. In order to prevent data loss, the oral account of the subject was recorded, and the consent was obtained in advance through the research consent form. The main analysis method was to repeatedly read through the recorded data. In the course of repeated reading, 130 meaningful words were translated into 19 academic terms and integrated into eight themes.

## 4. Results

This study draws 19 academic terms and eight subjects from the statements of the participants who had the experience of overcoming stress in the North Korean defector rescue mission, in order to understand their psychological phenomena and the underlying meaning and nature. The researchers sought to accurately extract the nature of the experience stated by the participants and produced results through the process of integrating several categorizations and sub-elements. The study also took the non-verbal aspects into consideration by recording the situation at the time of the interview.

### 4.1 Process of Derivation

This study used open-coding and axis coding to repeatedly read transcription books to derive 130 semantic words and then reconstruct them again with 60 meanings. The reconstructed 60 meanings were converted back to 19 academic terms to elicit eight themes. In contents of the eight topics below, only the most important statements will be summarized.

In table 2, 19 academic terms are integrated into 8 themes. 8 themes are as follows: 'calling and obedience', 'mission and stress', 'anxiety situation and stress', 'stress situation and frustration', 'stress experience and psychological change', 'self-insight and overcoming stress', 'resolution and recovery of stress', and 'new determination and rededication'.

**Table 2. Derivation process of theme**

Theme	Subtheme
Calling and obedience	Influence of North Korea Mission School
	Personal calling
Mission and Stress	Conflict with seniors from North Korean defectors
	Conflict with co-workers
	Identity confusion as a missionary
Anxiety and stress	Constant anxiety
Stressful situation and frustration.	Other missionaries arrested
	North Korean defectors arrested and repatriated to the north

	Relationship difficulties with North Korean defectors
	Human nature
Stress Experience and Psychological Change	A desire to give up
	When love for soul turns into hate
	Depletion of inherent resources
Self insight and stress overcome	Identification
	Temple of the Heart to the Lord
	Righteous identity
Stress resolution and recovery	Restoration of worship
	Personal rest and relaxation
New Determination and rededication.	Gospel again
	If I should die, I die

**Topic Group 1: Call and Obedience.** The seven people who participated in the study had something in common: they have completed a course at the North Korean Missionary School. Four of them are those who have been called by joining the North Korean Missionary School, while the other three are those who have already completed theology major and have jumped into the North Korean ministry work by personal calling. After completing the North Korean Missionary School, they went through a year of missionary training and became official missionaries.

– I have been studying in China since 1998 and was directly involved in the missionary work since 2001. It was very important to hide North Korean defectors from being forcibly sent back to the North because at the time there was a great starvation in North Korea. Especially for homeless children and women, it was absolutely necessary to hide them (Participant 1).

– I participated in a prayer meeting held by a North Korean missionary group and a North Korean missionary school, and after hearing the news of the rescue, I prayed together for many years and naturally joined the ministry little by little (Participant 3).

– Since 2011, I have served as a missionary for North Korean defectors in other communities, but for personal reasons, I moved to the current missionary society and completed the North Korean Missionary School and devoted myself as an executive secretary. When I became more certain about missionary work in North Korea, I received training to work as a rescue missionary (Participant 4).

**Topic Group 2: Mission and Stress.** One characteristic of the North Korean defector rescue mission is that it is carried out by a small number of people who have received special calls, and even if they share the same vision, each of them has different ways and styles. Unlike the general system, a layman may be appointed as a missionary and this causes conflicts between them and pastors. There are also missionaries from trained North Korean defectors. Conflicts that come from cultural differences are stressful factors for the missionaries.

– There seems to be some basic difference between North Korean defectors and us. In short, they have no place to lean on in Korea...so they tend to be obsessive with building careers...because they're trying hard to compete. They often try to coerce South Korean ministers as well. I think it's really hard at that time (Participant 2).

– A pastor from North Korea is our representative, and although it has been more than a decade since he came to South Korea, he still seems to have a North Korean-style way of thinking. Whenever we gather and hold meetings, the opinions of the South and the North often confronts one another (Participant 3).

– The missionaries are actually...It's a rule not to communicate too much. Even if we are in the same city, we communicate only with our seniors, not with fellow workers. It's a promise, to keep each other safe (Participant 6).

**Topic Group 3: Anxiety and Stress.** Missionaries who are in charge of nurturing North Korean defectors say that the difficulty they face on the field is the precariousness of the situation. As a missionary, one has to be fully prepared for every possible situation because there's no knowing when or where an accident will happen. However, preparations does not necessarily prevent unexpected accidents, such as North Korean defectors' mass escape from the missionaries, refusal to cooperate (especially from the North Korean defectors who are older than missionaries), smoking and drinking problem, or fight among North Korean defectors. These events keeps missionaries alert at all times.

– The worst part is when the trainees run away from the center. That's how North Korean defectors in every region except Thailand escape, and if they're caught by the police, 100% of them will be sent back. I feel like my anxiety is at its peak when that happens. I can't eat, I can't sleep. I start hating myself because I feel like they escaped because of me. Wow... This is a pain that I can't put into words (Participant 2).

– In a rescue mission, contacting and bringing defectors out of North Korea feels almost like Operation 007. You have to be very careful when they've just crossed the border or when you're taking sisters out of the settlement village. Random inspection really makes my heart pound and sometimes I can't even breathe (Participant 7).

**Topic Group 4: Stressful Situation and Frustration.** The study shows that missionaries at the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors feel frustrated when they are under extreme stress.

A rescue missionary—a renowned North Korean human rights activist who experienced two incarceration—said that he was struck by fear when he was in prison, thinking that the South Korean churches might forget his situation and that he might die without receiving any help. He also confessed that the vague anxiety that the Korean government would not be able to reach him in a communist country lasted throughout the imprisonment. When two missionaries from a missionary group were detained in China and were undergoing trials, everyone in the mission suffered from extreme depression, anxiety and fear. The missionaries are most afflicted when they hear the news about the arrest or death of the North Korean defectors who had been with them. This leads to a deep disappointment and frustration beyond stress. The most difficult part of living in a safe house with North Korean defectors is when the problem of men and women's physiological needs surfaces among North Korean defectors.

– I've been arrested twice and spent nearly three years in prison. At first, I was frustrated that I couldn't do anything. At the end, all I could do was to pray, because the fear of the unpredictable situation was too great for me to handle (Participant 1).

– Personally, one of the most heartbreaking memories of my life, is about a family of four with a couple with small kids. ... I've been told that there was a tragic incident in which the father of the family committed suicide on the way back to the North and that one of their children died of acute pneumonia. I was guilt-stricken by the fact that I couldn't protect them.

**Topic Group 5: Psycho-spiritual Changes due to Stressful Experiences.** The missionaries shows that one must live in front of God and must not lose holiness even before laymen. However, although they became children of God after the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, their sinful nature exposes them numerous sins. The missionaries confessed that when their sinful nature was revealed in the midst of the missionary field, they feel hindered and frustrated. In particular, those missionaries who are struggling under the heavy work load experience spiritual difficulties due to their inability to focus on their relationship with God. Also, the difficulties of former missionaries show that they are experiencing psychological difficulties because they cannot secure enough leisure time and personal time.

– Yes. That's right. There were so many moments when I wanted to give up. First, I really wanted to quit because it was impossible to recharge myself in this situation. Secondly, I had a strong urge to quit when my

expectations for North Korean defectors were shattered. But I'm still here (laugh) (Participant 7).

– There's hate growing in me. I can't help it, being a mere human. I love those people in the center who follows our instruction and endures the situation. But there are those who don't. Maybe the problem is not them, but me. I think I'm using them as an excuse. If I don't solve the fundamental problem—the absence of the Lord's love—I think this will still be a problem in the future (Participant 2).

– Our daily schedule is harder than what most people think. I wake up at 5 a.m. and when I'm done with everything—from prayer meetings to all kinds of programs and meals—it's well past 11 p.m. I'm always tired. I always think that I should pray with my heart and read Bible, but it doesn't really work (Participant 6).

**Topic Group 6: Self-insight and Overcoming Stress.** The spiritual self-awareness as a missionary helps one to look into oneself even in extreme stress or difficult situations, and to overcome stressful situation. The way to be a healthy missionary is to recognize God as the King in everyday life. To put him in the center of life is to have his guidance and fullness. One who is full of God should remember that he/she has the power to overcome any stressful situation.

– In the end, it's like fighting yourself. Because of my own incompetence, my own weakness, and my sinful nature that are embedded in me, I cannot see myself clearly (Participant 1).

– I think the definition of overcoming stress is very ambiguous. There's no guarantee that it won't happen again just because we're over it now. I think the problem lies in the fact that we consider ourselves to be strong like Superman. I think we should not miss the fact that we are not Superman, but weak lambs who are in need of the care of the Lord. In fact, as long as I continue this job, same situation will repeat itself over and over, only different in its form (Participant 5).

– I don't try to overcome stress. But even at this moment, I believe that the Lord is with me and just hand these situations over to Him. Most of the time the Lord solves it himself and when I praise him, my heart melts. I think it's important to put my heart before the Lord (Participant 6).

**Topic Group 7: Stress Relief and Recovery.** Missionaries on the scene of the rescue of North Korean defectors needs to have their own small room to worship the Lord, receive spiritual support and his guidance. It is necessary for them to feel the joy that comes from the ministry. The missionary who is so closely connected with the Lord, has the power to manage stress on his own and solve the situation. In addition, rest as a part of the ministry brings out richer results. Personal rest is essential, for the tiredness in body also affects the spiritual state.

– In church journals, the concept of Sunday holy water is actually becoming a little dim.... I decided to change my mind from now on. I'm going to re-examine my daily life and try to secure time for prayer each day. Reaffirming the mission becomes clear when you stand before the words of God (Participant 2).

– I think the concept of worship is *Coram Deo*. So, I used to be rigid every moment. The thought that I should always better drove me into stressful situation. But now I want to be free in the Lord (Participant 3).

– I can't spend time with my family, and I'm always giving excuses of being busy. So my husband is having a hard time, so I'll spend all my time with my family and recharge myself.... A family is like an internal battery that fills up the source of power. I think I should take care of them more from today (Participant 7).

**Topic Group 8: New Determination and Rededication.** In the many twists and turns of the ministry, the missionary deeply understands that if one kneels down at the Lord's feet and experience his touch, one would recover again. During the dangerous ministry of rescue mission, the participants came to realize that God is the one who could protect their hearts from all the hardships even when they themselves could not. It is also said that missionaries who carry on the calling of the mission have to live their lives abiding by the

nature of Jesus Christ, which is a difficult process of denying their own human nature. Living life as a Jesus Christ is a life that kills itself thoroughly before God and a life that denies itself. The missionaries' experiences show that if they deny themselves before the Lord, die with the Lord, and live with the Lord, they will be able to handle everything because the Lord would look after them.

– The wonderful grace of the Lord, who repairs what is broken, always rules my life. I worship and praise the Lord on the spot. As long as the Lord does not regret calling me, I will continue to serve as a missionary (Participant 1).

– The last two years have been the most difficult time of my life. Accidents won't stop happening, such as arrests and forced repatriation of North Korean defectors. It was so painful that I wanted forget everything and run away. But I learned from a certain event that the Lord was with me even in those moments. When I realized that I was not the one who deserved to do this mission, and that I was led by the providence of the Lord, I regained your grace. So I'll always be here to obey the Lord, as long as he permits me (Participant 2).

– I still dream of going there. Although I have become an exile and it is now a land that I can never enter, when the Lord opens the way I will run there without hesitation (Participant 7).

#### 4.2 Contextual Structural Statement

The contextual semantic structure is to construct the meaning of experiences identified from the perspective of participants by defining topics and core meanings revealed in each experience of the participants and integrating them. Contextual semantic structural statements reveal personal experiences of the missionaries by reflecting the unique environment and circumstances of the participants. The structuralization of their experiences of overcoming stress was divided into four stages: the stage of the calling, the stage of conflict and confusion, the stage of self-examination and overcoming, and the stage of recovery and re-devotion.

#### 4.3 General Structural Statement

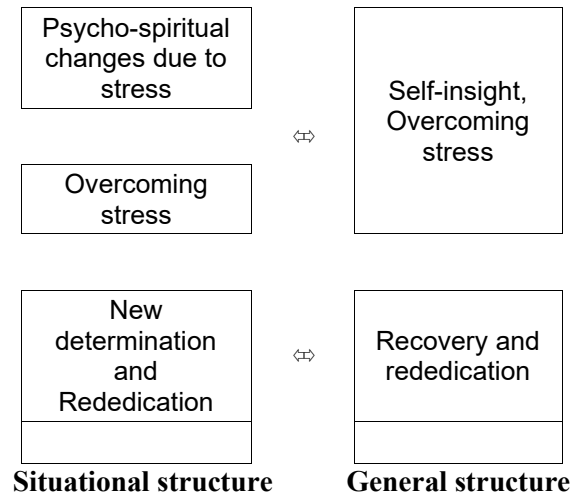
In order to schematize the structure of the missionaries' experience of overcoming stress, the researcher integrated and reanalyzed the eight topics derived from the nature and meaning of the psychological phenomena of the participants and the contextual structural statements, resulting in five general structures. The structure of experience was organized into five by grouping together the similar ones among the eight topics. Calling and obedience are described as a part of the personal calling, whereas the topics concerning mission and stress, anxiety and stress, stressful situation and frustration are combined into one category of stress experience. In addition, Psycho-spiritual changes due to stress experiences are described as they were, while self-insight and overcoming stress, stress relief and recovery were grouped together and redefined as stress overcoming. Lastly, new determination and rededication are redefined as recovery and rededication.

Table 3 below shows how situational structural descriptions relate to general structural statements. The general structure is described on the right side of the following table.

**Table 3. Situational structure and general structure**

Calling and obedience	⇔	Calling
Anxiety and stress	⇔	Stages of conflict and confusion





## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

### 5.1 Discussion

In this chapter, we analyzed in depth the phenomenological expression of the experience of overcoming stress experienced by North Korean defectors' rescue missionaries and found that stress can be changed by positive and negative aspects and insight.

#### 1) What is the stress experience of missionaries at the rescue site for North Korean defectors?

Stress is a vital part of life's dynamic that is generally necessary to live and maintain life[11]. However, the stress experienced by missionaries at the rescue site was much different from the general stress situation, and it is only experienced by the missionaries in the same group who shares their special situation. Tension and anxiety caused by emotionally persisting stress forced the missionaries to shrink psychologically and physically, resulting in somatic symptom disorder. In addition, while the lack of communication between missionaries is tolerated for the sake of safety and security, resulting conflicts have caused considerable stress that led to serious situations, and some of the missionaries had no choice but to leave the community. The most intense stress situation for the missionaries at mission sites is when the North Korean defectors were arrested or forcibly sent back to the North due to a raid by public security officers. In such situations, the missionaries experience a sense of loss, along with a sense of guilt for not bringing them to safety. In rescuing North Korean women who had been sold for human trafficking in China, the conflict between different moral and ethical values has caused confusion and stress among many missionaries. Some of them became targets of social criticism and derogation, which even led them to give up their mission as missionaries. They also experience great stress when they cannot control the conflicts that occur while raising North Korean defectors in the safe house, or when they have to stay with the defectors 24 hours a day without rest.

Based on the points made above, we can summarize that the stress situation of North Korean defectors' field missionaries falls under the theme of loss, deficiency, and conflict[11]. Rosenzweig, summarizes loss, deficiency and conflict as the causes of frustration, which supports the results of this study. According to Rosenzweig, frustration is a psychological result of stimulation from stress situations that profoundly affects a person's psychology[12]. The participants of this study also show frustration and pain from stress stimuli. The stress experienced in the situation of loss is mainly caused by the arrest and repatriation of North Korean defectors. Arrest of the fellow missionaries has also left severe trauma. In addition, the difficulties in communication between fellow workers and conflicts with North Korean defectors have turned out to be a source of considerable stress. Finally, we could see that the lack of certainty in calling and the lack of rest and relaxation were also stressful situations for the missionaries.

2) What is the structure of psychological phenomena shown the experience of the missionaries?

It has been shown that the missionaries on the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors have strong wills to overcome stress even in highly stressful situations. But there were anxiety, fear, and frustration in the missionaries' psychological structure and also the contextual forms of avoidance and escape, enough to make the most part of their psychological structure vulnerable. But from a broader perspective, the process of experiencing and overcoming stress was being strongly influenced by the circular and organic interaction of faith. The missionaries asked themselves about their identity before God and went through a process of contemplation, attaining deeper insight into themselves in order to repair and restore the collapsed temple in their lives. The missionaries showed that they were making progressive changes and growing through their insight. This had led us to confirm that stress does not only work as a negative factor.

3) How do the missionaries at the rescue site overcome stress?

The following results were obtained by analyzing the results of the stress overcoming experience by the phenomenological research method. Generally speaking, the missionaries overcome their stress by relying on faith. However, there were some cases in which the missionaries suffered post-traumatic stress disorder. From a Christian point of view, we could see that this area was in need of God's touch. On the part of the church, it is absolutely necessary to provide special care for the missionaries. The efforts made on scene of missionary work is hard to be recognized, and one always experience extreme fear and anxiety[13], on top of the internal struggle against oneself and externally, the pressure of life-threatening jobs that consumes enormous energy. But they could overcome their stress through worship and deep meditation for the Lord who called them. Also, it became evident that a proper rest and spiritual recharge can restore collapsed body and soul, and help them to overcome the stress they experienced at the mission site. By collecting and studying the stress experienced by the missionaries, psychological phenomena in their expressions was revealed and could be described in a realistic and concrete manner. Through this process, the researcher could witness the changes in the field missionaries as they overcome their stress, and fulfill their mission before God.

## **5. 2 Conclusion and Suggestions**

The results of the study are meaningful in that the structure of psychological phenomena shows how missionaries at the rescue site who experienced frustration amid the stress crisis recover from stress.

First, missionaries on the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors are those who are devoted to their respective calling and mission, who serve in the area that most of the people are reluctant to serve as missionaries. The cultural conflicts they face on the scene as they manage their ministry, security and safety issues, and the anxiety and fear of the arrest and repatriation of North Korean defectors, as well as the conflicts and communication difficulties among their fellow workers, have been shown as the causes of extreme stress. It has been revealed that the stress situations that the participants have experienced are more intense than the general stress experience, enough to cause confusion about their identity and to make them leave the mission site. The missionaries also face difficulties due to lack of emotional communication with North Korean defectors. In addition, there were pressure of the ministry which frustrated them and caused internal conflicts, the sense of loss from the North Korean defectors' arrest and repatriation, and the lack of emotional communication between missionaries.

Second, we could see that the psychological structure of missionaries who experienced stress shifted from negative reactions to positive decisions. At the scene of rescuing North Korean defectors, missionaries experienced anxiety, fear and frustration, and had the urge to avoid and escape the situation. But they had faith as the inner resource to help them overcome the experience. By clearly knowing their identity to God and giving a clear answer to what their position was, they worked to change the crisis into growth. In the process of looking into oneself, the spiritual maturity that enables one to know God and to know oneself was became a great force to overcome stress.

Third, the results of the study show that the missionaries could overcome their stress when they understand and obey His will that called them to the mission. They were fleeing from stress situations to take sanctuary in God in order to overcome extreme fear and anxiety. In addition, it shows that they can easily recover if they create an environment in which they can handle their stress and channel the stress into a positive direction by

using spiritual stimulants. The environment to overcome stress is a proper rest, and the spiritual stimulant refers to a spiritual restoration through words and prayers. As for human resources to overcome stress, the study shows that Korean churches need to develop enough human resources to help the missionaries to continue with their ministry. On psychological level, there is a need for proper resources to approach the missionaries by the means of counseling in order to restore their broken emotions. It is necessary to have a therapist who can fully understand and sympathize with the issue of arrests at the scene and the trauma caused by the repatriation of North Korean defectors, and to help the missionaries to let go of their old emotions. Also, the therapist needs to help the missionaries to fulfill their mission again by providing education to prevent all conflicts they may experience and securing time for spiritual recharging in order to confirm their identity as missionaries.

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