❚ Article ❚

Africans in South Korea: Adaptation and Coping Strategies and Lessons from Experiences

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Abstract

Globalization has facilitated the movement of people from one continent to another and provided opportunities to experience diverse cultures. Africans living in Korea migrated from their home countries for various reasons, including education and employment. While Korea had previously earned an international reputation as one of the most homogenous countries, its society is slowly changing, even encouraging multiculturalism. Data for this study was collected using a qualitative research method (a combination of focus groups and interviews) from six African groups in Korea. A questionnaire was sent to 175 migrants, and 120 completed and returned it. Recognizing these migrants' experiences can assist in understanding the uniqueness of their situations, and may help policymakers design integration programs and activities for migrants in general and those of African origins in particular. The findings indicate that the respondents employed several integration strategies at various points during their stay in Korea; most cited learning the Korean language as a breakthrough in the adaptation process. Additionally, the Korean government's programs for foreigners were evaluated as being encouraging for migrants. An overwhelmingly number of respondents agreed that their psychological sense of community (first introduced by Sarason, 1974) was paramount for successful adaptation in their new society.

❚ *Keywords* : Africans in Korea, migration, multiculturalism, culture shock, adaptation strategies, acculturation

Introduction

Whether it is a short, long, or permanent move to another country, migration has become a norm in the current fast-paced globalized environment. Globalization has led to an increasing number of people from almost every country engaging in cross-country migration. The concept of migration is not a new one; it started from our early African ancestors and "played an important role in the evolution of culture and civilization" (Dokos, 2017). Regardless of the demographic and socio-political and economic backgrounds, people migrate for different reasons and varying durations. Voluntary movement from one country to another, or involuntary movement, is getting easier, which means migrants need to adjust to their new environments. These adjustments mainly apply to culture, as the newly arrived migrant experiences different ways of living and the initial shock. The issues that emerge during this process prompt the need for both migrants and host countries to recognize and deal with the challenges and opportunities linked to adaptation.

The migration of Africans to South Korea (Korea) has been on the rise for the past 20 years. While Korea, with a population of almost 52 million, is generally viewed as one of the most ethnically homogenous countries in the modern world, recent statistics indicate that its foreign population has reached 2,524,656 (World Bank, 2019a); in contrast, the 2020 census recorded the first decline (by 20,838) in the Korean population (Chung & Heo, 2021). The present study focused on African migrants' adaptation in Korea, specifically exploring their reasons for migrating and adaptation mechanisms.

Literature Review

The following review of selected literature on migrants' adaptation to their new cultural environments confirms that adaptation presents problems for them that transcend mere superficial cultural differences, discusses specific and general solutions, and concludes that country-specific

initiatives are needed for the adaptation of current and future migrants in the Korean society.

Foreigner adaptation in a new society can be viewed positively or negatively depending on the individual's experiences. Such adaptation has long been identified as a potential problem for both the host country and foreigner, deserving serious attention. Neto (2002) researched the social adaptation difficulties Portuguese adolescents with immigrant backgrounds faced in France and found that strong adaptation predictors included competence in the host country while maintaining one's home culture. Moreover, these were stronger predictors of social adaptation than the psychological adaptation variables. Similar findings have been reported by other researchers (Aires, Weissheimer, Rosset, Oliveira, Morais, & Paskulin, 2012; Ismail, 2007; Parrish & Linder-VanBerschot, 2010). Foreigner or sojourner adaptation is not a new concept and has continued to evolve over time (Bond & Smith, 1996). Church (1982) stated that foreigner adaptation to a new culture requires psychological adjustments as well as involves culture shock. According to Adler (1975), culture shock, a normal part of adaptation to new cultures, emphasizes issues such as anxiety, helplessness, irritability, and the longing for more predictable and gratifying environments. More recent studies on cross-cultural adaption by Kim (2017) have revealed that long and extensive experiences of cultural adaptation could result in an individual's assimilation into the host country's mainstream culture.

Strategies for and durations of foreigners' adaptation to new cultures are as varied as the individuals themselves. For example, Lombard's (2014) study of international students in the Netherlands found that psychosynthesis techniques of self-identification exercise and counseling helped in easing culture shock, thus facilitating their adaptation in the host country. A study of expatriates in Malaysia examining adaptation highlighted the psychological, sociocultural, and work challenges they encountered and found that adjustments based on individual initiatives and mental strengths as well as support by peer expatriates and host organizations helped reduce clashes resulting from cultural differences

(Ismail, 2007). Social media also plays a significant role in foreigners' adaptation in host countries, which some scholars have investigated. The role of social media in the acculturation process of international students at UTAR Kampar in Malaysia was the subject of research by Goh, Ch'ng, Tan, Ong, and Wong (2019)—they found that it contributed in practical ways to facilitate the students' smooth assimilation by connecting them to various aspects of the university and countrywide resources.

Theoretical Background

Migration

The movement of a person or people from their home country to another is not a new phenomenon and dates to the beginning of time. A report by the International Organization for Migration (2018) indicated that there were approximately 244 million international migrants worldwide. Adding the number of internal migrations to that of international migrants provides a unique opportunity that sheds light on the importance of migration in various areas, including its economic, social, and political implications. The United Nations Population Fund describes migration as "a world on the move" and an important force for development (2016). It is different from immigration in that most migrants intend to return to their homeland (after accumulating wealth or obtaining education, training, and skills); immigration, on the other hand, is a permanent move from one's home country to another to establish a new life. The reasons for migration are as varied as the migrants themselves and include economic, political, and educational factors (Bhugra, 2004; World Bank, 2019b).

Culture Shock

The realization that all things, including smiles, people, structures, smells, cultures and traditions, foods, languages, and jokes, that one is

familiar with may suddenly disappear when one migrates to a new soci-ety is termed as "culture shock." The migrant suddenly comes face to face with a new set of issues that must be negotiated and approached carefully to be able to appropriately understand the new environment and people. Oberg (1960) indicated that culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. Culture shock can also be viewed as depression and anxiety (Irwin, 2007) and the uneasy feeling when a migrant en-counters culturally unfamiliar situations or people (Bochner, 2003). It is the shock of facing the new (Stewart & Leggat, 1998). According to Oberg and others (Stewart & Leggat, 1998), the natural reaction to culture shock manifests in two phases—in the first, the individual rejects the ways of the environment that are causing such discomfort, and in the second, regression occurs when the appeal of the home environment is extraordinarily strong and valuable. Leaving established and strong social networks behind can lead to alienation, isolation, and loneliness in a new environment.

   The phases of culture shock have been identified in popular literature and usually classified as follows: first, the honeymoon stage, when the excitement is at its peak and everything looks new and wonderful, which usually lasts from a couple of days to about a couple of months; second, the hostility and/or aggression stage, also known as the crisis stage, during which the individual increasingly appreciates and values their home coun-try—this is a critical stage (Furnham, 2019) because the person can decide to see it through or quit and return to their home country; the third stage, recovery or waking up to reality, is when the individual begins to learn the language and tries to navigate the new environment, and even tries to help newcomers; in the fourth and final stage, adjustment, the in-dividual accepts the culture and customs such as food, habits, and other norms of the new country, and enjoys and appreciates it (Adler, 1975; Furnham & Bochner, 1986, pp. 130–131; Irwin, 2007; Oberg, 1960). Some researches on culture shock have mentioned up to eight stages (Winkelman, 1994), categorizing these into the honeymoon/tourist, cri-

ses/culture shock, adjustment/orientation/gradual recovery, and adaptation/resolution or acculturation phases.

Language

Communication is an important and necessary means of integration into any community. Understanding and being able to communicate in the host country's language(s) can facilitate the migrant's social and other integration and adaptation (Zhang, Harzing, & Fan, 2018)—it is also a strong positive sign of the migrant's effort. Studies on migrant adaptation patterns point to a positive correlation between knowledge of a host country's language and reduced stress leading to positive acculturation (Selmer & Lauring, 2015).

Cultural Distance

The concept of cultural distance highlights the level of cultural differences that exist between the migrant's home and host countries. A major cultural difference between the two is an indication that the migrant will face difficulty acculturating in the host country. Accordingly, cultural distance is an important predictor of successful adaptation (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Acculturation is a two- or more-dimensional process whereby migrants retain their home culture, such as beliefs, values, and practices, while simultaneously acquiring those of the host country (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). According to the model developed by Berry (1980), acculturation involving the two countries (home and host) interconnects its four categories as follows: 1) *assimilation*, adopting the host country's culture and rejecting or minimizing the home culture; 2) *separation*, retaining the home culture and rejecting the host culture; 3) *integration*, adopting the host culture and retaining the home culture; and 4) *marginalization*, rejecting both cultures.

Assimilation and Integration

The classical theory of assimilation suggests that a migrant will adopt the host country's culture and reject or minimize their home culture. Assimilation is the social process ethnic minorities must navigate to become a part of the mainstream of American life (Alba & Nee, 1997). The theory assumes that in the process of assimilation or integration, certain characteristics of the migrant and of the host country will eventually resemble one another (Brown & Bean, 2006). Assimilation can be challenging and frustrating for both the migrant and host country—the former may want to hold on to their home country's culture and values while being reluctant to embrace those of the host country; on the other hand, the host society may be impatient with the migrant's inability to assimilate quickly, or may not understand the migrant's culture, language, and values, which may lead to a negative reaction toward the individual (Whitaker, 2015; Portes & Zhou, 1993). A major criticism of this classical theory is that it does not consider the diversity in migrants' economic, sociocultural, and educational backgrounds, reflected in current migration trends worldwide (Portes & Borocz, 1989). An effective integration policy that facilitates migrants' attachment to the host country is therefore beneficial for both parties. Undeniably, integration is a significant factor in effective and comprehensive migration management approaches (International Organization of Migration, 2006, 2012).

Adaptation Process

Adaptation is the unavoidable process a migrant must negotiate cautiously and sometimes energetically with moderate or a series of serious modifications and adjustments to a new society (Berry, 2003; Berry, 2006). Some researchers have referred to migrants' adaptation process as the "newness–struggle–success" continuum (Balasubramanian, Brennan, Spencer, & Short, 2016). This process usually presents some challenges in the host country—researchers have found that these in-

clude visa restrictions, language problems, cultural differences, lack of understanding of the host country's laws (Lam, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018), poor socioeconomic background, peer relations, and self-esteem, discrimination, and bullying (Altinyelken, 2009). Although most migrants experience some degree of difficulty in acculturating to their new environment, studies have shown that their children generally overcome adaptation stresses by learning the host country's language and culture through association and interaction with native children at school and community playgrounds (Portes & Rivas, 2011).

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of Africans residing in Korea. Korea was chosen because of its rise to international acclaim as one of the fastest miracle economies in the world and for its policy of being more open to foreigners. From the late 1960s to the 1990s, Korea recorded one of the fastest GNP growth rates in the world. It is home to some of the largest and most successful multinational companies—Samsung, LG, Hyundai, Kia Motors, and others are now household names worldwide. Moreover, Korea's dominance in the technology sector is widely recognized. Naturally, these successes are attractive to migrants.

Specifically, this empirical study aimed to identify the adaptation strategies employed by African migrants in Korea. The data collection method was divided into two sections: 1) a survey questionnaire and 2) small group interviews. The data was extracted from an online questionnaire on SurveyMonkey by providing the link through emails and WhatsApp. The survey sample was chosen based on the geographic location of most migrants in Korea—it comprised students and workers who have been living in Korea for at least six months and have legal status according to the Korean government's immigration requirements. The questionnaire was sent to 175 migrants, and the response rate was 68.6%. Zoom group interviews were conducted with six leaders representing the

social/cultural groups of Cameroon, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Ghana, and South Africa. The in-depth interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Qualitative data analysis using the systematic thinking process proposed for focus groups includes identifying themes and subthemes, charting, mapping, and interpretation (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The interviews with the six focus groups were summarized, charted, and then compared. The systematic thinking process is appropriate here because of the relationship between human behavior and emotions and instincts —this means that in a complex system or situation, such as migrant adaptation in a new society, individual characteristics are important in shaping their adjustment decisions. The IBM SSPS 26 Statistics program was used for statistical analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. These were included in the main determinants of coping and adaptation in host countries found by Warfa, Curtis, Watters, Carswell, Ingleby, and Bhui (2012) in their study of Somali immigrants in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. All respondents—68 (56.7%) male and 52 (43.3%) female—were aged 18 or above: 25 (20.8%) between 18 and 24; most between 25 and 34 (40.0%); 24 (20.0%) between 35 and 44; 14 between 45 and 54; seven (5.8%) between 55 and 64; and only three (2.5%) aged above 64. Thus, 95 respondents (79%) were aged between 25 and 64, which is considered to be the prime age for productivity and can contribute to their adaptation approaches (ILO, 2017).

Fifty-three (44.2%) respondents were married, eight (6.7%) were divorced, seven (5.8%) were separated, and 51 (42.5%) had never married. During the interviews with six leaders of social/cultural groups, all participants enthusiastically mentioned that being married lessened the anxieties associated with adaptation in Korea—they are in

a safe environment at home where they can communicate freely in their native languages; this also indicated that many single migrants join these groups to express themselves in their respective mother tongues.

Regarding length of stay in Korea, 36 (30.0%) respondents had lived in Korea for less than four years, 47 (39.0%) between five and nine years, 23 (19.2%) between 10 and14 years, 10 between 15 and 19 years, and only two (1.60%) for 20 or more years.

The ability to speak and understand the host country's language is an essential requirement for adaptation; accordingly, it is critical for migrants to acquire a certain level of proficiency in speaking, writing, and understanding it (Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018). Korean is the main language of Korea, although some English and Chinese is spoken. Twenty-two (16.7%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement "I speak and understand the Korean language well," meaning they were proficient in the language; 29 (24.2%) agreed with the statement; 26 (22.6%) neither agreed nor disagreed with it; and 30 (25.0%) and 14 (11.7%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, with it. Only 40 (33.3%) respondents indicated proficiency in Korean, suggesting that language ability may cause stress in the adaptation process.

People migrate internationally or nationally for several reasons, in-cluding family, education, and economic, sociopolitical, and ecological factors (Bhugra, 2004; United Nations Population Fund, 2016; World Bank, 2019). Sixteen (13.4%) respondents indicated spouse's job as their reason for migrating to Korea, 31 (25.8%) indicated economic factors, and only 11 (9.2%) cited political factors. The majority of respondents— 62 (51.7%)—had come to Korea for education.

Table 1.

Respondents' demographic characteristics

Age (in years)	Male (N)	%	Female (N)	%
18–24	12	10.0	13	10.8
25–34	22	18.3	26	21.7
35–44	15	12.5	9	7.5
45–54	13	10.8	1	0.8
55–64	4	3.3	2	1.7
64+	2	1.6	1	0.8
Marital status				
Married	30	25.0	23	19.2
Divorced	6	5.0	2	1.7
Separated	7	5.8	0	0.0
Never married	24	20.0	27	22.5
Years spent living in Korea				
Less than 4	16	13.3	20	16.7
5–9	25	20.8	22	18.3
10–14	17	14.2	6	5.0
15–19	9	7.5	1	0.8
20+	1	0.8	1	0.8
Language proficiency **(I speak and understand the Korean language well)**				
Strongly agree	1	0.8	20	16.7
Agree	12	10.0	17	14.2
Neither agree nor disagree	16	13.3	10	8.3
Disagree	27	22.5	3	2.5
Strongly disagree	12	10.0	2	1.7
Reason for migrating to Korea				
Spouse's job	2	1.7	14	11.7
Economic factors	28	23.3	3	2.5
Political factors	9	7.5	2	1.7
Education	29	24.2	33	27.5

Cultural distance is an important predictor of successful adaptation in a host country (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Table 2 presents eight cultural distance indicators ranked based on the mean score.

Fifty-four respondents (45.0%) agreed with "*I am not used to the pace of life in Korea*," thus ranked 1, while 46 (38.3%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*In my daily life, I feel tense and anxious*," which was ranked 2. Fifty-one (41.7%) respondents strongly agreed or agreed with "*I speak and understand the Korean language well*," ranked 3; 48 (40.0%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*I feel uncomfortable dressing in my national attire* ranked 4; 55 (45.8%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*I prefer 'Western' style of dressing*," ranked 5; 81 (67.5%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*I socialize with Koreans outside of official settings*," ranked 6; 98 (81.6%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*I am comfortable and feel safe living in Korea*," ranked 7; and finally, 101 (84.2%) strongly agreed or agreed with "*It is important to learn Korean to get through my daily activities.*"

These findings underscore the importance of cultural distance as a significant predictor of a migrant's smooth adaptation in a host country. The first three indicators emphasize that to adapt satisfactorily in the host country, the migrant should undergo a shift in their attitude toward the host country. Engaging in meaningful activities to purposefully and intentionally adapt to the new environment, such as learning the language and being positive and open to new cultures and values, facilitates the process. Successful adaptation can lead to individual and collective fulfillment in the host country if the cultural gap is narrowed (Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

Table 2.
Cultural distance

Indicator	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean score	Factor ranking
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
I am not used to the pace of life in Korea.	0	0.0	54	45.0	17	14.2	35	29.2	14	11.7	3.08	1
In my daily life I feel tense and anxious.	16	13.3	30	25.0	24	20.0	33	27.5	17	14.2	3.04	2
I speak and understand the Korean language well.	22	17.5	29	24.2	26	21.7	30	25.0	14	11.7	2.89	3
I feel uncomfortable dressing in my national styles.	22	18.3	26	21.7	31	25.8	27	22.5	14	11.7	2.88	4
I prefer to be dressed in "Western" styles.	10	8.3	45	37.5	51	42.5	8	6.7	6	5.0	2.63	5
I socialize with Koreans outside of official settings.	31	25.8	50	41.7	26	21.7	7	5.8	6	5.0	2.23	6
I am comfortable and feel safe living in Korea.	46	38.3	52	43.3	12	10.0	4	3.3	6	5.0	1.93	7
It is important to learn Korean language to survive in my daily activities.	66	55.0	35	29.2	11	9.2	8	6.7	0	0.0	1.68	8

Open-ended Question

Adaptation Challenges

The questionnaire included open-ended questions, the first of which asked the respondents to list two of the most challenging issues they faced in Korea. The responses were analyzed using the multiple response frequencies method. Table 3 summarizes the respondents' challenges. "Difficulty speaking and understanding Korean was selected 90 times

(76.3%); "Integrating into the Korean society" 75 times (63.6%); "Food and culture" 70 times (59.3%); "Racial discrimination" 56 times (47.5%); "Securing and maintaining good job" 16 times (13.6%); and "Weather and pollution" and "Constantly changing resident visa requirements" 11 times (9.3%) each. These responses are consistent with the results of other researchers (Altinyelken, 2009; Lam, 2015; Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018).

Table 3.
Adaptation challenges faced by Africans in Korea

Challenge	N	% of responses	% of cases
Difficulties speaking and understanding the Korean language	90	27.4	76.3
Integrating into the Korean society	75	22.8	63.6
Food and culture	70	21.3	59.3
Racial discrimination	56	17.0	47.5
Obtaining and maintaining good job	16	4.9	13.6
Weather and pollution	11	3.3	9.3
Constantly changing resident visa requirements	11	3.3	9.3
Total	329	100.0	278.8

Adaptation Strategies

The second open-ended question asked the respondents to list the adjustment strategies they have employed since migrating to Korea. Applying the qualitative data analysis model for focus groups, the responses were classified into general themes and then sorted into subthemes, followed by mapping and interpretation (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). Table 4 presents a summary of these strategies. "Meeting other Africans and foreigners and joining social/cultural groups" was selected 99 times (82.5%); "Intensively studied the Korean language" 90 times (75.0%); "Proactively making friends with Koreans" 66 times (55.0%); "Trying Korean foods and learning the culture" 61 times (50.8%); "Accepting differences in culture" 40 times (33.3%); "Asking for help"

34 times (28.3%); "Being patient, positive, and open-minded" 29 times (24.2%); and "Participating in voluntary activities and interacting with Koreans" 29 times (24.2%).

Table 4.
Adaptation strategies of Africans living in Korea

Strategy	N	% of responses	% of cases
Meeting other Africans and foreigners and joining social/cultural groups	99	22.1	82.5
Intensively studied Korean language	90	20.1	75.0
Proactively making friends with Koreans	66	14.7	55.0
Trying Korean foods and learning the culture	61	13.6	50.8
Accepting differences in culture	40	8.9	33.3
Asking for help	34	7.6	28.3
Participated in voluntary activities and interacting with Koreans	29	6.5	24.2
Being patient, positive, and open-minded	29	6.5	24.2
Total	448	100.0	373.3

Advice to New Migrants

The last of the three open-ended questions asked the respondents to list the two most important pieces of advice they would give to a prospective migrant to help them have a better adjustment experience. Utilizing the qualitative data analysis model (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994), six main areas of importance were identified, presented in Table 5. "Learn the Korean language and culture" was selected by most, 79 times (65.8%). "Work hard, make friends with Koreans" was selected 50 times (41.7%); "Be patient, curious, and positive" 46 times (38.3%); "Be prepared for some xenophobia by some Koreans" 28 times (23.3%); "Be polite, respect the elders, culture, and law" 20 times (16.7%); and "Share your culture with Koreans whenever possible" 17 times (14.2%).

Table 5.
Advice to new migrants and/or those planning to migrate to Korea

Advice	N	% of responses	% of cases
Learn the Korean language and culture.	79	32.9	65.8
Work hard, make friends with Koreans.	50	20.8	41.7
Be patient, curious, and positive.	46	19.2	38.3
Be prepared for some xenophobia by some Koreans.	28	11.7	23.3
Be polite, respect the elders, culture, and law.	20	8.3	16.7
Share your culture with Koreans whenever possible.	17	7.1	14.2
Total	240	100.0	200.0

Open-ended questions allow respondents to contribute uniquely by elaborating ideas, suggestions, and criticisms. Thus, the inclusion of such questions combined with the interviews complimented the findings by dispelling the myth that one policy or program is applicable to all. The key findings from these approaches are summarized below:

1. Social/cultural groups or associations provide a place to African migrants to exchange "survival" ideas. One of the leaders shared: "*We just talk freely and share with each other how to deal with some of the stressed in our daily lives. We become each other's family in a new country. These gatherings help to relief the burning sense and feeling of homesickness that many of us experience.*"

2. Another stated, "*Through our meetings which usually takes place once a month we establish a social fund to assist any of our members in times of need. Not only members from our home countries but others. For example, we donated money to the Korean Red Cross to assist family members when the ferry sank killing many Koreans. Of course, this is our home, and we feel the responsibility to act as we will do in our home countries.*" The emphasis is on being your neighbor's keeper.

3. Sharing particulars about free Korean language classes, employ-

ment opportunities, free medical services, and scholarships are some of the ways members of the social groups disseminate life-changing information. One group leader stated, "*Many African migrants face tons of problems, many of them are students but they also work not only to survive in Korea but also to remit money to their families*."

4. African migrants in Korea face many adaptation challenges, but these do not deter them from focusing on their goals. Most of the students graduate in record numbers, and many of them get academic scholarships. The discrimination they face and the "looks" they get from many Koreans provide them with opportunities to educate some of them who may not be familiar with Africa. Africans who speak the language try to initiate communication with Koreans; in fact, the latter are usually shocked to hear Africans speaking and understanding their language. One group leader revealed that during one of their meetings, a member showed up with a Korean friend; the two had met on the subway. Other Koreans now regularly attend these gatherings and enjoy socializing, trying new foods, and sharing in a different culture's way of life without leaving Korea.

5. Many African students teach their Korean counterparts English in exchange for Korean language practice. This is the start of long friendships that help narrow the cultural gap/distance for some migrants and facilitate the adaptation of many of them in the Korean society.

6. An unexpected statement from one of the respondents revealed that they avoid speaking to Koreans as an adaptation strategy.

7. Technological advances play a critical role in migrants' adaptation. In one of the interviews, the interviewee was extremely excited that during their monthly meetings, many of the migrants call their relatives in their home country. Coincidentally, the meetings usually take place on the last Sunday of the month when many group meetings are held in the home country. These

occasions help reduce the stress of adaptation and feelings of homesickness.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on the adaptation of Africans in the Korean society. It should be viewed as an introduction to a topic that goes beyond the superficial strategies of assimilation/integration in a new host country. Therefore, the limitation necessitates recommendations for further studies to assist broader groups of migrants and governments of host countries, not just Korea. Future research should include the following:

1. A review and evaluation of the Korean government's position on international migration.
2. A study of the relationship or interconnectedness between the various interest groups, including civil societies, in formulating Korea's migration policies, and how these have been adjusted over time.
3. An examination of the role of local governments, overseas Korean nationals, and other stakeholders in the formulation of comprehensive migration policies—the Korean government's population data indicates that there has been a significant increase in the number and diversity of migrants in Korea, and this number is bound to increase as Korea's economic power continues to impact the world.

Moreover, as Korea's birthrate continues to decline at an alarming rate, migration may be one of the ways to supply the labor needed for the continuous development of its economy. Creating an environment that welcomes and assimilates migrants would be a win-win for the country and migrants. According to Kuhn (2021), "South Korea faces a choice: allow immigration or suffer demographic decline."

Conclusion

Korea is well known as one of the strongest economic superpowers. Through corporate giants such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai, and Kia Motors, the country has placed itself in a strong position, internationally. Naturally, inhabitants of other countries, including Africans, are attracted to Korea. This study investigated the adaptation of Africans in Korea. Data was obtained through a survey instrument and interviews with six African social/cultural group leaders. The findings revealed multidimensional adaptation challenges and adjustment strategies, indicating that foreigner adaptation is a complex but important, and thus, its deeper understanding is necessary; knowledge of these challenges and strategies could lead to a successful adaptation process. The findings also show that African migrants are resilient and try to overcome adaptation difficulties while focusing on their goals. Once known as one of the most ethnically homogenous countries, Korea is fast transitioning into a multicultural society, hosting nationals from almost all parts of the world. It is now easier to migrate from one country to another, and as many open their borders for various reasons, transnational migration will continue to increase.

Below are the recommendations to Facilitate Successful Adaptation

This study revealed that most African migrants in Korea are there for education and economic reasons. They have a strong motivation to achieve their goals, and are, therefore, willing to face the challenges posed by migration and adapt. Below are the recommendations to facilitate successful adaptation:

Migrant interaction is essential for successful adaptation; therefore, policies by the government and educational institutions should provide a variety of opportunities for migrant students to engage in meaningful and productive exchanges. Many migrants in this study reported being aware of the importance of learning the Korean language for not only

their education or job but also daily activities. Offering language classes is, thus, important. This study also highlighted that African migrants take the initiative to learn the Korean language and culture and offer advice to new migrants, which includes studying the language. They recognize the important role language plays in the adaptation process, and hence, it should be encouraged by educators, employers, and the local community, especially the civil society.

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