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Article

The Family Migration of Vietnamese Students in Korea

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the difficulties and challenges Vietnamese students families face in Korea. To analyze the process and reasons of their family migration and their difficulties and challenges during studying here, I introduce the concept and classify the types of family migration. The study emphasizes that the main reasons Vietnamese student families decide to migrate to Korea are family reunification and children. However, they face many difficulties and challenges in childbirth, children care, educating children, and living expenses. The study found that first, in the process of giving birth and raising children, the Vietnamese student families lack the support of their extended family. Their children do not receive any government tuition or educational support in Korea. Thus, if their children go to kindergarten, they have to pay very high tuition fees. Second, because of the language barrier, they have difficulties in educating children, communicating with doctors during medical and health check-ups, and accessing basic policy and lifestyle information in Korea. As a result, most of these families had to pay very high hospital fees for the first hospital visits, and the language barrier has put them under psychological pressure.

Keywords : Family Migration, Vietnam, South Korea, international students, difficulties and challenges

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Introduction

Vietnam and Korea are geographically close and have cultural similarities, including Confucian traditions and, recently, culture shared through the “Korean Wave”. The two countries have seen the broad development of diplomacy and economic ties since Vietnam and Korea agreed to re-establish full ambassadorial relations on December 22, 1992 (Nguyen Hoang Giap et al., 2011).

In addition, due to the influence of the Korean wave and the similarity in culture, the rapid development in quality Korean education training has attracted many Vietnamese students to study in Korea. Cultural similarities and the development of international cooperation in all economic areas, cultural exchanges, and education have played an essential role in increasing numbers of Vietnamese students coming to Korea to study. Especially since May 5, 2015, after Korea and Vietnam signed the FTA (Free Trade Agreement), Korea has become the country with the most significant investment capital in Vietnam (KOTRA, 2018). As a result, large businesses are flocking to invest in Vietnam and the employment opportunities for students who know Korean are tremendous. In addition, the strong impact of the Korean wave and the development of Korean language training centers in Vietnam have made young Vietnamese people increasingly interested in Korean culture, fashion, cosmetics, and language learning (Kim, 2017). Therefore, the number of Vietnamese students who want to study in South Korea is increasing quickly, as is the number of Vietnamese student families.

However, studies of international students in Korea have primarily focused on Chinese students. Although studies of Vietnamese students and international students in Korea have rapidly increased in recent years, they are still relatively few, and the field is relatively undeveloped. In recent years, a few studies have been published on the adaptation of Vietnamese students to cultural and university life. Yoon et al (2016) focused on negative dimensions such as cultural conflicts when discussing Vietnamese students at Korean universities. They pointed out that

Vietnamese students often have difficulty in university life because of limitations in their Korean language ability in relation to those around them as well as conflicts with professors and other students.

Le Thi Huyen (2016) emphasized similarities between Korea and Vietnam, particularly in the context of Confucian culture. Despite this, Vietnamese students in Korea have been documented as experiencing problems with adaptation to the university environment. In light of this, Le Thi Huyen Chan (2016) emphasized the need for external support to help students adapt to college life and resolve a variety of problems. As an adaptation to university life is a major factor influencing maturity and career success, students' subjective impression of their experiences with education while living in Korea. Policy measures such as Korean language programs and cultural adaptation programs have been provided to ease the difficulties of Vietnamese students in adapting to Korean culture, while the use of SNS by Vietnamese students can also speed adaptive processes (Nguyen et al., 2015).

Thao Mien (2013) shows how the influence of Korean cultural content on Vietnamese students and Korea's national image draw them to study in Korea and attempts to trace the factors underlying the competitive recruitment and retention of foreign students in Korea. Lim (2018) discovered that Vietnamese students use SNS not only to learn Korean but as a tool to connect with family, friends, relatives, and other contacts. Other foreign students or communities use SNS to expand relationships, preserve family ties, and display their national identities.

The university period is a time in which students prepare for their careers by acquiring specific skills which will enable their success in specialized fields. Along these lines, Korea's science and technology programs have proved particularly attractive to foreign students. Kim (2015) explored the professional activities of Vietnamese students graduating from science and technology programs. Ha (2005) states that Vietnamese students will play a significant role in future relations between Korea and Vietnam. Therefore, supporting career preparation for Vietnamese students in Korea, including cultural exchange, can be an important na-

tional task. In addition to supporting the university lives and learning adaptations of Vietnamese students, supporting the development of students' career skills can prevent attrition and facilitate their future success, in turn aiding the development of mutually beneficial ties between the two countries.

However, so far as we know, no previous research has investigated Vietnamese students' families or international students' families in Korea. It is very difficult to find any research related to the difficulties and challenges that Vietnamese students' families face in their lives in Korea. Meanwhile, the number of Vietnamese students who bring their families, spouses, and children to immigrate to Korea is increasing rapidly. However, they do not seem to be of interest to the government or researchers.

In order to fill this gap, this study explores the current difficulties and challenges that Vietnamese students' families face as a representative sample of all other international students' families in Korea. Additionally, this research will be useful for the purpose of policy suggestions to the Korean government.

Therefore, this study will analyze empirical data through in-depth interviews and observations of Vietnamese student families' experience of economic activities and daily life, then compare and analyze their migration motivation, path, and difficulties living in Korea.

The main research subjects in this study are Vietnamese students holding D-2 visas for undergraduate, masters', and doctoral programs and their family members such as spouses or parents. They can sponsor their spouse/child or parents to Korea in order to reunite or support them in taking care of their children. However, their family members are granted dependent or temporary, short-term stay visas such as C-3, F-1, and F-3 visas and cannot work in Korea.

This study aims to understand the main factors that influence their decision to immigrate to Korea and their difficulties and challenges in living and studying in Korea. The following research questions have been proposed: Why did the family members of Vietnamese student families

decide to emigrate to Korea? How have their migration processes worked? What are their difficulties and challenges in Vietnamese-student-family life?

Definition and Types of Family Migration

Definition of Family Migration

Family relationships are an essential element of human life and are a driving force for various social phenomena. Even in the case of cross-border migration, family relations have affected migration. In traditional immigrant countries where the formation of foreign communities arises through large-scale migration, the migration of family units prevails right from the start of the migration. Migration has been divided into three main types: labor migration, humanitarian migration, and family migration.

Although family migration is considered one of these three types of migration, family migration is not differentiated from other forms of migration. In formal policy, family migration is primarily defined as the first residence status, meaning a visa is tied to a family member, such as a spouse, parent, or child. However, it is unclear whether the family is a stable place or not. Such definitions are complicated by frequently shifting roles and statuses within destination communities.

Regardless of their formal visa status, those who migrate with family members (either simultaneously or via chain migration) can be recognized as “family migrants.” As recognized by official policy, family migration is not a homogeneous phenomenon but includes many different forms. It can be divided into many categories whose composition is often affected by each settlement country’s conditions and official policies.

Types of Family Migration

According to Kofman (2004), families of migrants can be divided into three main categories, including reunified families, newly formed families, and families who have migrated together. In addition to these

three categories, they have also added sponsored family members (Kofman & Meeto, 2008).

Reunified families are those in which one member migrates first to prepare for reunification and often invites others. Family reunification refers to the situation in which family members join another family member who lives and works in another country. Since the 1980s, family reunions have been a significant form of legal immigration in a considerable number of countries, especially in Europe. The importance of this phenomenon has gradually caused several countries with high populations of migrant workers to adopt more permissive policies concerning family migration. In fact, with the notable exception of the Gulf states, most host countries now have enacted basic rules for reuniting families. Family reunification is very important for migrant workers. Family reunification allows them to improve their living conditions, solve social adjustment issues more smoothly, and integrate better into the host society (Wickramasinghe et al., 2016).

Additionally, family reunification also positively impacts the working capacity of migrant workers. Family reunification is often limited in practice by the conflict between an individual's human rights and the security and economic needs of the state. Although the importance and value of family reunification are universally accepted, it has not been recognized fully as a right, with such legal frameworks characterized by strict requirements, case-by-case evaluations, and considerable policy diversity between states. The recently established Committee of Migrant Labor is the supervising body of the United Nations Convention on migrants' rights. Thus, it is the most competent counsel in determining the extent and scope of essential rights of migrant workers and their family members, including family reunification issues. However, up to now, the Commission has not had an opportunity to apply the Convention in practice (Hatch, 2010).

Another dimension of migrant family formation is that of new families. Though some migrant families may reunite in destination countries, other families form in situations such as the migration of a fiancée

or the marriage of two migrants who arrived in the country separately. Spousal migration is sometimes viewed as a gray area, insomuch as such two-person families may be considered to acquire a new form with the birth of children in the destination country (Kofman, 2004, pp. 246-247; Kofman & Meetoo, 2008, pp. 155-156).

The most common form of family migration consists of families who simultaneously migrate together. In most destination countries, including Korea, only certain immigrants, such as skilled workers, can travel with their families. In England and Germany, the demand for specialized labor in information, communication, and welfare has increased, leading to increased family migration (Kofman, 2004, p. 247; Kofman & Meetoo, 2008, p. 156).

The classification of family migration patterns is based on trends observed in countries with a long history of immigration. There are some limitations in applying the basic framework of such immigration systems to other societies, such as Korea. Part of this is due to embedded assumptions that imagine migrants' families will invariably remain in their countries of origin rather than remaining in their destinations. Migrant marriage and childbirth should be considered necessary when analyzing the dynamics of migrant families. Furthermore, it is essential to consider family relationships formed in the original and destination countries when addressing family migration and visa categories at the institutional level.

Research Method

This paper utilizes qualitative research methods to examine the difficulties and challenges of Vietnamese student families in childbirth, children care, educating children, and living expenses. In qualitative approaches, the researcher studies the economic activities and daily life of the subjects and observes and learns from their experiences. Therefore, these research methods include substantive interactions between the researcher and issues and contextual analysis of the research process.

Techniques and topics of concern in qualitative research include fieldwork, biology, folklore, ethnography, oral history, biography, text analysis, and FGI focus group interviews (Yoon, 2004, p. 18). This study uses the focus group interview method (FGI) in conjunction with in-depth discussions of Vietnamese migrant family members. The in-depth interviews concerning Vietnamese family migrants in Korea were conducted from November 15, 2018, to December 30, 2019. A total of 20 people from 10 families participated in the interview process. It was divided into two main groups: Vietnamese students (Table 2: Lead immigrants) and their family members secondary immigrants such as students' mother, father, or partners) in many different regions and cities across Korea, including Jeonnam Province, Gwangju City, Seoul, Incheon, Gyeonggi, Busan, and Daejeon.

During the interview process, I conducted both field surveys and in-depth interviews. Being able to integrate into the daily lives of these research participants has afforded me much helpful knowledge. I used the face-to-face structured interview through direct communication with the questions focusing on the reasons and pathways to immigrate to Korea and the difficulties and challenges that Vietnamese student families have faced while living in Korea. I prepared the Vietnamese questions and had multiple meetings with them at cafes, Vietnamese restaurants, and Vietnamese community events. I also visited five families' houses on weekends or evenings, which helped me become much more friendly and comfortable collecting factual information about their living conditions and lives.

Besides, the focus group interview method (FGI) was chosen to obtain detailed and in-depth information and data about the experiences and perspectives of the interview participants. Three groups with four to five participants each were gathered for group interviews in Gwangju and Naju in the Jeolla region and Gyeonggi Province. Open-ended questions focusing on “whys” and “hows” were prepared in Vietnamese. Participants were encouraged to “brainstorm” about some questions, in a method described by Michinov (2012).

To collect more data for the study, I conducted in-depth interviews with three groups whose members were friends. The group interview questions mainly focused on the difficulties and challenges they face in Korea, such as childbirth, child education, insurance, and plans.

In addition to face-to-face structured interviews and focus group interviews, I have kept in touch with them via phone and social networks such as Facebook and Kakao Talk (a popular messaging client in Korea). This social network has allowed me to follow up with additional questions and to better understand the participants' difficulties and challenges (Tables 1 and 2).

The below tables show the interviewees' general characteristics, including gender, year of birth, education level, length of stay, and residence. To encode each object of the study clearly for ease of reading, I divided the information on the participants into two different tables. Table 1 contains the basic information of interview participants in Korea by their familial connections to Table 2, which consists of lead migrants who are Vietnamese students in Korea.

Table 1.
Family (Secondary) Migrants of Vietnamese students

Case ID	Gender	Age	Education	Year of Entry	Visa	Job in Korea	Relation with lead migrant
A2-1	Female	33	Bachelor	2016	F-3	Laborer	Wife
A2-2	Female	27	Bachelor	2016	F-3	Food Service	Wife
A2-3	Male	36	Middle	2012	E-9	Laborer	Husband
A2-4	Male	30	Bachelor	2017	F-3	None	Husband
A2-5	Female	55	Middle	2018	F-3	None	Mother
A2-6	Female	34	Master	2016	F-3	None	Wife
A2-7	female	30	Bachelor	2010	F-3	Laborer	Husband
A2-8	Female	45	High	2019	C-3	Laborer	Mother
A2-9	Female	30	Bachelor	2015	F-3	Food Service	Wife
A2-10	Male	37	Master	2015	F-3	Laborer	Husband

Table 2.

Lead Migrants (Vietnamese students)

Case ID	Gender	Age	Education	Entrance	Visa Status	Job	Family Formation
A1-1	Male	37	Doctoral Student	2016	D-2	student	Reunified
A1-2	Male	34	Doctoral Student	2015	D-2	Student	Post-migration
A1-3	Female	31	Master's Student	2014	D-2	student	Reunified
A1-4	Female	30	Doctoral Student	2016	D-2	Student	Accompanied
A1-5	Female	34	Doctoral Student	2015	D-2	Student	Reunified
A1-6	Male	34	Doctoral Student	2015	D-2	Student	Reunified
A1-7	Male	31	Master's Student	2011	D-2	Student	Post-migration
A1-8	Female	21	Undergrad Student	2016	D-2	Student	Reunified
A1-9	Male	32	Doctoral Student	2014	D-2	Student	Reunified
A1-10	Female	36	Doctoral Student	2015	D-2	Student	Reunified

Ten participants listed in Table 1 are secondary migrants who followed relatives who came as Vietnamese students, comprising three men and seven women aged 27 to 55 years old. They include four wives, four husbands, and two mothers of ten Vietnamese students. The ten participants listed in Table 2 comprise seven doctoral students, two master's students, and one undegraded student. There are seven reunified families and three post-migration families.

Results

Factors Affecting Vietnamese Student Families' Decisions to Migrate to Korea

Why have so many Vietnamese families decided to emigrate to Korea? And more broadly, why is the mobility of Vietnamese people toward Korea and other developed countries increasing so rapidly? To analyze and understand the factors affecting their migration decisions, we need to understand the domestic contexts of Vietnam (i.e., push elements) and Korea (its pull factors and factors complicating migration

processes). Push and pull factors are often closely related, continuously interacting, and sometimes inseparable. The presence and relative weight of each specific factor influencing migration decisions are often quite different according to migrants' visa categories. That is, their apparent primary purpose is migrating.

Family reunification

According to European Convention on Human Rights, everyone has the right to be reunited with their families. Therefore, even though they do not have a nationality to enter and stay in a country where members of their families are legally residing or have citizenship, they still have the right to immigrate to that country to cohabit and preserve and unite their family unit. That is the aspiration and freedom of every human being. In South Korea, the Korean government has issued immigration laws that allow foreigners who are legally residing in Korea under visas such as F-5, F-2, F-6, E-1, E -2, E-3, E-7, D-2, and foreigners with Korean nationality to sponsor spouses, children, and parents to Korea. Migrants are furthermore qualified to bring an unmarried partner, dependent children, or dependent parents to live with them in Korea. After admission, family members receive a residence permit and may continue to live in Korea as long as their guarantors maintain valid visa status.

Multigenerational living arrangements (i.e., living with one's parents and grandparents) are still standard in most Vietnamese homes, especially in rural areas of Vietnam. The family is deeply embedded in traditional Vietnamese family concepts; thus, many Vietnamese people, regardless of social class or migration status, retain a strong desire to live among extended family (Tran Thi Minh Thi, 2021).

However, family reunification is not automatic. There are many procedures and several requirements involved when bringing family members to Korea. For example, the guarantor must provide financial guarantees (essentially that they have the funds to care for accompanying family members) and proof of housing. Moreover, the eligibility requirements

for legal immigrants of different residence statuses, such as students, marriage migrants, or workers in Korea, also differ for family sponsors. Specific research results are as follows:

In terms of types of family migration, the research results show that seven student families are migrating to Korea for family reunification, two student families in the form of post-migration, and one student family in the form of accompanied. Thus, the proportion of student migrant families by family reunion accounts for the highest proportion. This interview result shows that after Vietnamese students move to Korea to study in master's and doctoral programs under receiving scholarships, they realized that the life and working environment in Korea has many more advantages than in Vietnam. Therefore, after stabilizing their lives, they sought to sponsor the remaining members to come to Korea to reunite with their families and live together. Family migration is not just a decision made by these students individually, but a collective decision made by their entire family, and family reunification has become a key driver of family migration (Kainth, 2009).

Participants A2-6, A2-1, and A2-5 all said that after their husbands came to study in Korea, they decided to bring their wives and children to Korea to join them. In each case, the primary motivation of the following migrants was family reunification. A2-1 decided to quit her good job in a big company because she and her daughter did not want to live far away from her husband.

I don't want to live away from my husband, and my daughter needs to be with her father. Therefore, after living in Korea for six months, he sponsored my daughter and me. I quit my job at a big company where I had worked for over five years. But I don't regret it; I need my family to be together. (A2-1, female, age 33).

At the same time, both A2-6 and A210 quit high-status jobs in Vietnam to reunite with their husband and wife. Both had master's degrees and worked as permanent lecturers at prominent universities in Hanoi. They were very passionate and loved teaching. Their lives and work were stable and satisfying. Both have daughters and have spouses studying

for Ph.D. programs in Korea. A2-6 was a lecturer at the University of Agricultural Education for more than four years. When her husband received a Ph.D. scholarship to study in Korea, she was very happy. Because she loved her husband and wanted her daughter to be with both parents, she did not hesitate to quit her university job and move to Korea. Korean educational opportunities for her daughter also proved attractive.

The reason I came to Korea was to reunite my family. I want my daughter near her father. My daughter loves her dad very much. I also do not want to live away from my husband. (A2-6, female, age 34).

A2-10 was a lecturer and staff supervisor for over ten years at a big university in Hanoi, which is considered one of the highest social positions in Vietnamese society. To many people living in Vietnam, having such a stable, high-paying job and being employed in a major university would be a dream come. However, when his wife went to study for a Ph.D. program, he made the tough decision to resign from his university and go to Korea.

I had to think a lot. There were many sleepless nights. I don't want to go anywhere. I just want to continue working at my university and live a normal life in Hanoi. But my child misses her mother. I was also lonely when I was away from my wife and at home raising my daughter alone. If we stay apart, then my family is no longer a family, and my daughter will be unhappy. Therefore, I had to consult with family and friends. Some said, don't go, others said, go. I didn't know whose advice to follow. My mother did not want me to go to Korea with my wife because she was afraid of the consequences of losing my university job. But in the end, I decided to give everything up to keep my family and make my daughter happy. (A2-10, male, aged 37).

A2-10 shows that although the choice to migrate was tough, he felt his daughter needed to be close to his wife, having both parents and

remaining a family, prioritizing this over his work. He was ready to give up his job and favorable lifestyle in Hanoi to emigrate to Korea with his wife and daughter. This shows that for many Vietnamese people, the family is sacred. Family is one's home, and one's home is the family. From birth to adulthood, family plays a vital role in promoting a sense of stability, safety, and life satisfaction (Le Nhu Hoa, 2001). They often extend not just to nuclear families but to parents, grandparents, and siblings. Above all, most Vietnamese people consider raising children in the presence of both parents to be of extreme importance. Thus, family reunification is highly desirable or even necessary for Vietnamese migrants abroad.

In addition, Vietnamese migrants often desire to reunite with their nuclear families (i.e., spouses and children) and aspire to be close to and care for other family members such as parents, grandparents, and siblings. Two of this study's interviewees accompanied their children to help them with housework and other responsibilities. For them, being with their children and grandchildren has made their lives more meaningful, and healthy, so no matter where their children live, they want to be around and help to take care of their grandchildren.

A2-4 is a Vietnamese student's father who went to Korea to study in a doctoral program. He decided to leave his family and move to Korea to take care of his grandson because his wife and son-in-law could not come to Korea due to work.

My daughter is studying as a doctoral student here. She likes to study, but she has a son. Her son was only eight months old when she moved to Korea. She could not leave her son in Vietnam with us. My wife is busy taking care of my son's children. My daughter's husband is busy at work as well, and neither can quit their jobs to take care of her son." (A2-4, male, age 65).

A2-5 had the same reasons for deciding to go to Korea as A2-4.

A2-5's daughter is also an international student studying for a Ph.D. in Korea. While studying in a Ph.D. program, her daughter returned to Vietnam to get married and became pregnant. Despite this, her son-in-law was too busy with his work in Vietnam and could not go to Korea with his wife. Therefore, she had to leave her business and move to Korea to take care of her daughter during her pregnancy and her grandchild during infancy.

Her husband was too busy with work in Vietnam. I worried that when she gave birth for the first time, there would be no one to take care of her, and she had no experience caring for a newborn baby. I had to close my shop and come here with my daughter. (A2-5, female, age 55).

Thus, family reunification has afforded Vietnamese student families more opportunities to continue to develop conditions and quality of life and integrate into Korean society more quickly.

Educating Children in light of the advantages and good quality of education in Korea

Besides family reunification, a desire to take advantage of the educational infrastructure in Korea to educate their children is the second-factor impacting Vietnamese student families' migrant decisions.

The significant disparity in the quality of education between Vietnam and South Korea has become an essential factor affecting international student families' migration decisions. The lack of high-quality educational institutions, the large number of students in the classroom, and the quality of education in Vietnam have led many parents to find ways to bring their children to study abroad. Meanwhile, South Korea is considered a country with many cultural, educational, and economic attractions. The proximity to Korea, cultural similarity, and financial or scientific economy attract strong interest among Vietnamese youth. Many Vietnamese students have chosen Korea as a future study destination for themselves and their

families. Moreover, of course, when given the opportunity to work or study in Korea, besides family reunification, creating conditions for children to learn in the Korean educational environment is the purpose of migration or an important factor influencing a family's migration decision.

A2-6 and A2-10 both said that they decided to emigrate to Korea to reunite their families and the desire of their children to have a better learning condition in Vietnam. A2-6 has a daughter in kindergarten. She said that in Vietnam, kindergarten is not good. She wants her daughter to have a better learning environment in Korea.

We want a better kindergarten environment for our daughter. We think the kindergarten environment in Vietnam is not very good. I see the education environment in Korea is much better. (A2-6, female, age 34).

Meanwhile, A2-10 also mentioned that his wife persuaded him to come to Korea, citing that Korea has a modern, adequate, and suitable education environment. They have a daughter who finished 3rd grade at an elementary school in Vietnam. However, there are more than 50 pupils in Vietnam per class, and although they live in Hanoi, their daughter's schooling conditions are not good. They want their daughter to have better educational conditions to improve her future prospects in Korea.

The schools are outstanding in Korea. There are only 20 pupils per class. The teachers are amiable, and there is all modern equipment. Our daughter can learn and grow up here. In Vietnam, my daughter was studied at classes with crowded students. There were over 50 students at her classes. The teachers were so strict. There was no lunch support at her school. Thus, every day, my mom or I had to pick her up for lunch and a nap, and then took her to school again in the afternoon. And my daughter's curriculum was very time-consuming, and she had lots of homework. She was always tired because she had to carry a heavy school bag daily to school. (A2-10, male,

aged 37).

The interview results show that Vietnam's current education has many shortcomings, such as unimproved textbooks and deteriorating school facilities. The content of general knowledge is somewhat overloaded, heavy on academic theory, and lacking application and practice; too much class time and homework, students lack time to exercise, apprehend, and apply what they have learned, and are less able to integrate into the community life and society. The quality of general education is only assessed primarily by grades, graduation exam results, admission to colleges and universities, and national and international student contests related to excellence. Meanwhile, the forms of examinations and tests are still heavily focused on input and reducing the output, not following a rigorous, scientific, and objective process, so in some cases, results are based on achievement achievements, without properly assessing the quality of students. These are enormous inadequacies and limitations of Vietnamese education. As a result, many families have decided to find opportunities for their children to study abroad in a better place. Meanwhile, Korea's educational competitiveness ranked 29 out of 59 countries.

Moreover, at the International Research Conference on Academic Achievement (PISA) organized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), in recent years, Korea has continually been rated 3rd out of 65 countries for studying abroad. In particular, Korea took first place in the digital reading assessment conference. With this competitive educational base, Korea can provide the best academics for students. Therefore, the advantages and good quality of education in Korea have attracted international students and have a strong impact on the decision of their families to migrate now.

Pathways of Student Family Migration

Interview results show that all of this study's student participants followed more or less the same process to bring their family members

to Korea: First, the first immigrant needs to find opportunities to study abroad under scholarships. After that, they have to apply for a visa and enter Korea for study purposes. Then, they find accommodation and settle into studying and research at the university and living in Korea. At the same time, they must learn about government immigration policies. All international student respondents shared that they knew about social networks, about the application process, immigration laws, and family sponsorship policies. Facebook groups of Vietnamese immigrants in Korea have played an essential role in their family pathways. Specifically, they learned from the practical experiences of Vietnamese students who had successfully sponsored their family members' migration to Korea.

A1-10 and A1-5 shared the same experiences to find a way to bring their family to Korea.

Because I wanted to bring my husband and child here, I asked my friends about the procedures and documents required to invite relatives to Korea. I searched for this information on the internet as well, and during the 6 months after arriving in Korea to study, I had prepared the required documents to invite my husband and child by family visiting visas and sent them to the Korean Embassy in Vietnam. (A1-10, female, aged 36)

I asked Vietnamese friends I knew about the procedure to invite my parents to come to Korea on F1-15 visas. My friends were very enthusiastic about helping me, and the immigration department approved my request for my mother to come to Korea. (A1-5, female, aged 34)

Thus, after studying all the information on how to apply as a guarantor for relatives coming to Korea, they prepared the visa applications and sent them to Vietnam. Their family members in Vietnam could then apply for visas at the Korean embassy in Hanoi or the Korean Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City.

However, in order to bring family members to Korea, first migrants must prove that their finances are sufficient to support their family in

Korea. However, most international students who invite relatives to Korea do not have enough funds. Therefore, they need to seek the help of friends and relatives. A1-10 is one example. After entering her Ph.D. course, she studied the procedures and requirements to bring her husband and daughter to Korea to live with her. The scholarship she received from her university was insufficient to prove financial stability for sponsorship purposes, but with her friends' experiences and help, she borrowed enough money to deposit in the bank to obtain the required financial documents to send to the embassy.

I had finished the first semester of my first year when I started to prepare the documents, but the Immigration Bureau required that I have at least 10,000,000 KRW in my bank account to be eligible to invite my husband and child to Korea. I had saved just over 4,000,000 won. So, I met all my friends and told them I needed to borrow money from them to prove my finances. My friends each lent me some 200,000 won; some lent 500,000 won, and some lent 1,000,000 won. In total, 8 of my friends together lent me a total of 6,000,000 won in my bank balance. (A1-10, female, aged 36)

After seeking financial help from Vietnamese friends in Korea to complete the application for confirmation of a sufficient account balance following the requirements of the Immigration Department, these students continued to explore the visa application documents to sponsor their family by themselves. This shows the important role of their friends' immigrant experiences and the financial difficulties international students face while studying in Korea.

In sum, ... Vietnamese students want to bring their families to Korea, and they must spend time and learn from their friends who immigrated to Korea before them or from Vietnamese immigrants' social networks. They then need to seek a financial guarantee for inviting their families.

The difficulties and challenges of Vietnamese student families Language barrier

Research results show that the language barrier causes Vietnamese student families great stress and even psychological pressure under the difficulties of giving birth, health care, and educating their children.

First, the Korean language barrier is the most difficult challenge in giving birth and acquiring health care. The student families ... found more significant challenges relating to childbirth, especially concerning language difficulties. Most of the interviewees from this group reported language-related difficulties with their hospital visits.

In the case of A2-6, she shared that although she had studied Korean in Vietnam, she could not understand what Korean people said when she came to Korea. She particularly noted difficulties in conversing with doctors or other medical staff during prenatal visits and obtaining health services for herself and her child ... Thus, she consistently relied on support from her husband's lab mates to provide English translation for her.

Before coming to Korea, I studied Korean for one month. But when I listen to Korean people speaking the Korean language, I don't understand anything, and when I speak the Korean language to them, they don't understand anything either. It makes me so tired. The most extreme situations are when our child is sick, and I take her to the clinic. The doctor often says something that I can't understand. Now, I am pregnant, too. Sometimes, there is pain here and there, but I do not know how to explain it to the doctor. At these times, I have had to ask my husband's lab-mate to translate for me through the phone. To bother them all the time is also embarrassing and difficult. (A2-6, female, aged 34)

Similarly, A1-5 also required help from her lab mates.

When I was pregnant, although I lived in Korea for a long time, I did not have time to study Korean because working in the lab was very hard and I mainly used English with my professors, so I did not know Korean. Therefore, when I went

to the doctor's office, it was challenging to talk to the doctor in Korean. I have to ask my friends and lab mates to translate for me or use translation software on the phone. At first, I had a Korean friend accompanying me to help me with the service. Later I went on my own and asked the doctor to write a note that my lab-mates could translate. (A1-5, female, aged 34)

Second, the language barrier has caused them difficulties in educating their children. The children of Vietnamese migrant families make up two groups: those born in Vietnam and those born in Korea. Most of those born in Korea was born to young parents and are currently under seven years old. Those born in Vietnam were usually older than seven in this study. The educational challenges faced by Vietnamese migrant families differ according to their children's ages.

Working conditions (particularly the long hours required to earn enough to support their entire families) often leave Vietnamese student families little time to help their children adapt to life and studies in Korea. A1-10 also said that although she knows Korean, she works in a research lab from the morning until the late evening, so she does not have enough time to take care of her child and teach the Korean language to her daughter and husband. Meanwhile, her husband has more time but doesn't speak Korean to teach their daughter.

I have to research the lab from 9 am to 10 pm because of the pressure of studying, test preparation, and preparing class presentations. Therefore, I do not have time to teach the Korean language to my daughter or study with her. My husband can not speak Korean at all, so he is unable to read any of the notices he gets from my daughter's school. (A1-10, female, aged 36)

Most of the interviewees said they never had or had only briefly studied Korean before coming to Korea to reunite with their families.

Before coming to Korea, I studied Korean for over a month in Hanoi. But when I came to Korea, listening to Korean people, I didn't understand anything. (A2-6, female, aged 34).

Differences in word order, grammar, and inflection between Vietnamese and Korean make Korean difficult for Vietnamese people. Additionally, Vietnamese people find difficulty in Korean's syntactic complexity and its use of embedded clauses. Therefore, it is difficult for migrants to understand entire Korean sentences (Kim et al, 2015). Aside from the grammatical difficulties, finding opportunities to learn Korean seems very difficult for many would-be migrants because there are few Korean classes or even teachers available in Vietnam, particularly in rural villages and outside of large cities in general. Meanwhile, learning Korean or any other language requires long study. Moreover, many factors affect language acquisition, several of which are beyond the control of individual learners, including age, education level, aptitude, curricula, proximity to language sources, and access to interactive opportunities. Despite its difficulty, proficiency in Korean is extremely important for Vietnamese migrants because if they are fluent in Korean, they can far more easily integrate into Korean life, reduce logistical pressures and stress, and gain access to many opportunities otherwise unavailable to them, including most notably a diversity of jobs.

However, most Vietnamese students can speak English very well, but they have no time to study the Korean language due to their research responsibilities at their lab. At the same time, economic issues and familial and other time pressures limit migrants' opportunities to learn Korean. International student interviewees often mentioned that they are eager to attend Korean classes, but find that university studies, laboratory work, and or factory shifts leave them without sufficient time

My husband doesn't know Korean. He works at his lab every day and talks to his professors and friends in English. He says he needs to focus on his research under the pressure of publishing scientific papers. Even his university provides free Korean classes every semester, he has no time to study Korean anymore. (A1-5, female, aged 34)

As a result, most members of Vietnamese migrant families do not know and cannot communicate in Korean. Therefore, the Korean language is both a challenge in living in Korea and the most significant obstacle many migrants face when attempting to adapt to life in Korean society. Insufficient Korean skills cause many problems in daily life, including the issues related to healthcare and education mentioned above. Other primary topics include the inability to read Korean, including transportation issues. Interviewees A2-5 and A2-10 all said that they could not go out much or do anything alone during their early days in Korea.

I can use English a little, but I can not speak Korean at all. Korean is difficult. Only my wife knows a little Korean. Whenever she takes us to go out, we can go. If not, my daughter and I stay home or just walk around her university. (A2-10, male, aged 37)

A1-4 said that because her father did not know the Korean language and did not have any friends or relatives, he suffered from severe depression, high blood pressure, and chronic insomnia. After nearly three months of living in Korea, these issues forced her father to return to Vietnam to take care of her son.

My father encountered a lot of difficulties. He did not know Korean, so he stayed at home with my son every day. My son was so little and could not talk much. There was no one to talk to. Then, he had homesickness, and he didn't talk anything at all. He became stressed again, and he said he had hypertension. The doctor said he was not sick when I took him to the hospital. He could not sleep and acquired stress by himself. The doctor said that it was better to let him go home. Therefore, I had to buy an air ticket for him to go back to Vietnam and take care of my son alone from that day. (A1-4, female, aged 30)

It shows that student families face difficulties in their daily lives and are lonely because they do not have friends and relatives to talk to and share their feelings and problems.

At the same time, most Vietnamese students coming to Korea to study in master's and Ph.D. programs can use English well in study and do research, but they cannot use the Korean language for everyday life. They also face stress from taking care of all their family members, and they cannot fully share their difficulties with anyone. A1-4 shares that she is also stressed because she did not know what to do with her father. She had to bring him to meet the doctor and then let her father return to Vietnam due to the doctor's advice. She said that since her father went back to Vietnam, she had had to take care of her son alone. She also developed health problems while living in an unaccustomed place, with a more challenging climate to which she was not accustomed.

The most difficult problems were my health, language issues, and not having friends. At first, I breastfed my baby, so I was tired and stressed. Then the seasons changed and I got sick, too. (A1-4, female, aged 30)

Many migrants do not know Korean, making it impossible for them to express their intentions, feelings, and emotions to those around them. This renders what little they can express imprecise, which can be a problem, particularly when interacting with teachers or healthcare professionals and just friends. A2-10 revealed that he was once depressed, lonely, and stressed due to isolation and a lack of Vietnamese friends since he know no Korean and was unable to communicate with others.

There were no Vietnamese people around my place at that time. My wife had to go to school all day. Only my son and I stayed home. Because I could not speak Korean, I didn't dare to go out. In Vietnam, I traveled around town and saw my friends. But when I came to Korea, I felt like I was in prison. I know a bit of the Korean language, but I still feel helpless in

everything. At that time, I always wondered... “Why did I have to come here? Why? Why is my life like this?” And I was crazy and irritable with my wife. (A2-10, male, aged 37).

In particular, Interviewees A1-9 and A1-10 also shared that they sometimes felt as though they would collapse from the stresses of having to provide for the entirety of their family’s economic and logistical needs.

In addition to the pressure of studying and doing experiments in the lab, I have to take care of economic matters for the whole family. My family members can not speak Korean, so from going to the market, going out, eating out, going to the doctor, even going to buy traffic cards, or going to the bank, I have to go with them and provide directions interpretation. Sometimes, I’m stressed and tired, like I want to collapse. (A1-9, male, aged 32)

Meanwhile, A1-10 mentions facing the same pressure and difficulties. All the stress and fatigue left her husband depressed, their family conflicts intensified, and she became ill, requiring an emergency room visit.

Because my husband does not have any friends here, I was so stressed. Sometimes we quarrel. I was tired of studying pressure, tired of taking care of my family’s economy by meticulously saving my scholarship money, and constantly having to worry about documents for my husband and my daughter. I had to help him and my daughter change from a C-3 visa to an F-1 visa to stay here with me. While my husband was constantly angry and demanding to go home, he was angry with me and claimed that it was so boring here and he wanted to go back to Vietnam. He did not know how hard I had to work to bring them here. I was so tired and got stressed; then I was seriously ill. (A1-10, female, aged 36)

Thus, because their family members do not know Korean, they could not share difficulties at work and settle well. Therefore, the first migrant becomes the person taking care of everything for the entire family. This has put more pressure on the first migrants and has a strong impact on other aspects of life, psychology, and family relationships, especially in the early days of Vietnamese migrants' stays in Korea.

Not knowing Korean makes it difficult for them to access information about the welfare system in their host countries and access healthcare and other social services. To help solve these issues, the Korean government offers free Korean education programs for foreigners, such as basic communication classes and culturally focused classes nested in social integration programs. Free TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean) test preparation was given at multicultural family support and labor support centers. Still, most Vietnamese migrant families reported they had not heard about these classes or did not know where to enroll. Many want to learn Korean but do not know how to start.

No one told us about KIIP classes. I don't know where they teach or how to register. (A2-1, female, aged 33)

Once, I met a Vietnamese bride. She also talked about this Korean class, but it was for only marriage migrant women. I thought that because I am not a marriage migrant and I am only here on a visitation visa, I couldn't learn. (A2-10, male, aged 37)

Many migrants assume that as foreigners (that is, without direct familial connections to Korean citizens) they are ineligible for government programs. They are not given information about Korean government welfare programs offered to foreign residents and thus lack knowledge and information about... free Korean language and government welfare programs because all the information is written in Korean, and they do not know where and how to get the official information about these programs. These results show that the language barrier has become the greatest

difficulty they face in adapting and finding the information they need to live in Korea. Meanwhile, as Korean is the key to developing themselves, socially integrating, and living successfully in South Korea, their lack of it causes them many difficulties, both material and psychological.

Difficulties in living expenses and children care.

Next to the language barrier, living expenses for a family pose an enormous burden for migrant families, especially for Vietnamese student families. Because students who are eligible for family sponsorship study in master's or doctorate programs, often receive scholarships to study abroad from professors or the government in their home country or the host country. However, these scholarships usually only provide enough funds for the living costs and study expenses of one person. Meanwhile, if they are married and have children, it is challenging to leave their spouses and children in their home country. Therefore, they need to invite their nuclear family of spouses and children, and some also sponsor an extra parent to assist in their children's care. The scholarship is then insufficient to cover all the family's living expenses.

Interviewee A2-4 said that his wife studied for a Ph.D. in commerce and received a scholarship from the Vietnamese government of 670,000 won/month, and when working at the lab, she received additional research support from the university of 240,000 won/month. He thinks that this scholarship is only enough for one international student, but in reality, his wife has to take care of both her father and a 3-year-old son in Korea, so it seems that the living cost is always at the limit, and their funds are inadequate and they are in need.

One month, she got 670,000 won from the Ministry of Education in Vietnam and 240,000 won from our university, and there was a total of 920,000 won per month. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese government pays the whole school fee, so at this level, she can feel freedom if she is alone. However, she still has our son and her father. So, each month, I had to pay

220,000 won for the house renting, 320,000 won for the kindergarten fees of our child, and 50,000 won for insurance. She has only a little more than 270,000 won left for living expenses. But my kid also drinks milk, and she has to use 200,000 won for food and all others per month. Therefore, even I work in Vietnam; I have to save money and send it to her as soon as she wants. (A2-4, male, age 30).

Thus, it can be seen that Vietnamese students' families have meager incomes. The scholarship only accounts for 34.7% to 52% of the total average monthly income of a Korean person in 2018 of 2,881,250 won per month. Moreover, to continue receiving their scholarships, Vietnamese students are also under pressure from competing with other international students in their labs because this scholarship is the primary source of income for studying and living in Korea. Therefore, the economic burden seems to be on their shoulders. As these meager scholarships are not enough for them to raise their children in Korea, their families constantly face a lack of living expenses and their children are always at a disadvantage in care and nutrition.

In addition to paying for daily expenses, providing childcare also places a heavy burden on migrant families. Besides, taking care of the quality of life, including mental, social, and academic, and psychological wellbeing of children, plays an essential role in determining future success (American Public Health Association & American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011). Moreover, surveys of migrant student families have shown that one of the main goals of migration is to seek better educational opportunities for their children. However, children's care is not just about taking care of children at home but also caring for children at the center (including kindergartens, preschools, and schools), and taking care of children at home or sending children to school also creates a significant burden for Vietnamese migrant families. Especially if they have children going to school, paying tuition becomes an enormous burden.

In some cases, the students were pregnant during their doctoral or

master's programs. They said that the scholarship was almost not enough for them to live during pregnancy, and they had to limit the money. The A2-5 interviewee shared that her daughter was a doctoral student. After giving birth, due to hard work and economic pressure, she forced her to send her granddaughter to Vietnam to her mother-in-law's family in order to care for her granddaughter when she was only six months old.

My daughter cried a lot when she decided to send her daughter to her husband and parents-in-law in Vietnam. I think she was unfortunate and missed her daughter a lot. But we have no other choice. I could stay in Korea to help her take care of her baby, but she could not concentrate on studying and researching at her lab, and we met a lot of difficulty in living fees. My granddaughter was only six months old. (Sad). (A2-5, female, age 55)

Similarly, student A2-7 had been going to South Korea to pursue a master's degree program because she wanted to be close to her husband. Because she studied abroad self-financed, she had to work to earn money to pay for school fees and other living expenses. However, while studying abroad, she became ... pregnant and gave birth to two children in Korea. As she did not have enough economic resources or time to take care of her children, she was forced to send her children to Vietnam ...

I sent my first daughter and son to Vietnam when they were only five months old. When sending our children to Vietnam, we also had to send monthly money to our parents to take care of my children. (A2-7, female, age 30)

The difficulty in income and living fees and stressful research life in Korea forced her to send her newborn baby to Vietnam.

At the same time, due to limited income, Vietnamese student families have specific common difficulties due to housing conditions. The

crowded housing conditions and lack of facilities have become the leading cause of the tensions and conflicts in the relationships in their families.

Vietnamese student families experience considerable stress because of their oppressive living conditions. Adequate housing can be regarded as a fundamental and essential component of daily satisfaction. Moreover, small dwellings and overcrowded living environments can negatively impact family members' mental health, including children.

A2-7 revealed that her family rented a two-room apartment, and all internet, heating, and television services were adequate, but because she shared her dwelling with a total of six people, including her parents-in-law, her husband, and two kindergarten-aged children, she felt her apartment was rather inadequate and that she lacked personal space. Disruptions caused by the children's noisy play activities ... caused conflict with neighbors and within the family.

We rent a two-room house with two bedrooms and a private kitchen for 350,000 KRW a month, and a deposit of 5 million KRW, which includes internet, television, heating, and hot water. There were originally four of us: my wife, two children, and me. But since my parents-in-law came, there have been six of us. My parents-in-law live in 1 room, and the rest of us sleep in the other. (A2-7, female, aged 30)

A1-4 said she and her family lived in a studio that should have been for one or two people, but in her case, there were three people, including her father. Their living conditions were stifled and greatly impacted their morale. Moreover, her son was very young. The studio was in a building with many other small studio rooms where many international students lived. Therefore, whenever one of her children got sick and cried or loudly complained, the landlord scolded her and tried to drive her out of the apartment, especially in the middle of the night.

I rent a small studio near the school. I had to deposit 2 million won, and every month, I pay 250,000 won for renting this

studio. When my father was in Korea, he slept on the floor in one corner of the room, and my son and I slept in another corner. The room is tiny. (A1-4, female, aged 30)

The small, cramped room ... strongly impacted their emotional well-being. The crying of a child affected all people living around them, and her father also suffered from depression, which emphasizes the importance and inadequacy of their living and housing conditions.

Prospects

International students mainly have high levels of knowledge and scientific expertise. Most of them have high educational positions in Vietnam. Eight of the ten international students have been young lecturers and researchers at universities in Vietnam, and nine of these ten will all graduate with masters or doctorates at universities in Korea. They are all excellent at studying and research. Therefore, they have received scholarships from the Vietnamese government or Korean government or fellowships from the projects of Korean professors. They are also part of the migration group for which the process is straightforward, proactive, and the quickest. In particular, when asked about their plans or prospects in Korea, eight of the ten Vietnamese student families said that they want to continue to stay in Korea to work and live after graduating from their master's or doctoral programs. According to them, Korea is a good place for them to seek professional opportunities and a safe and friendly place where their children can access excellent study opportunities and build better futures. A1-10's response is representative of the shared aspirations of the current international student migrant families.

Currently, my daughter is attending elementary school in Korea and has integrated very well into Korean life. She always says she likes studying in Korea, and she doesn't want to study in Vietnam. We also see that life in Korea is rich in intense study and work pressures, but life here is also very

peaceful and safe, and the people here are very good. We develop our expertise. Therefore, we have no intention of returning to Vietnam and want to continue living and working here for a long time. So, after graduating from the Ph.D. program, I will find a job and work here. Then, I will try my best to change to visa F-2 and then change to an F-5 visa. I want my daughter will grow up and get an education here. (A1-10, female, aged 36).

Similarly, A1-2 said that he found Korea to be a very good place for work and personal development after a period of study and research compared to Vietnam. His long-term plan is to stay here to work after graduation.

Because after a period of studying and researching, I think Korean society is a perfect place for work and development compared to the environment I came from in Vietnam. After graduation, I want to stay here to work. If having the chance to get an F-5 visa or get Korean nationality, I want to try that, too, because I want to spend all my life with family here (A1-2, male, aged 34)

At the same time, one Vietnamese student's family decided that they will return to Vietnam after she graduates from her Ph.D. program because she has received a Vietnamese government scholarship under which she must return to Vietnam to work at least two school years, and one undergraduate student said that she has no plan yet.

Discussion

In summary, this paper argued that the student family group faces difficulties related to childbirth, health insurance, and educating children. First, in the process of giving birth and raising children, they seem to lack the support of the extended family. Young Vietnamese student fami-

lies often take care of their children by themselves when they give birth in Korea. They cannot get financial support or newborn care support from their parents. As a result, some people have to send their children back to Vietnam before they are two years old because they do not have time to care for them. Then, when children are of the age to attend preschool, they sponsor children to move to Korea. However, they are always considered foreigners; the children in these families do not receive any government tuition or educational support in Korea. Therefore, if their children go to kindergarten, they have to pay very high tuition fees, which imposes an economic burden on the whole family.

Second, regarding the immigrant children in these families, the most significant difficulty is the language barrier. These children take a long time to cultivate Korean and adapt to completely new learning and living environment in Korea. Meanwhile, their parents are international students who are always busy studying and researching at the lab; they seem to find it hard to get care from their parents.

Third, due to limitations in Korean communication (because most international students use English while studying abroad), most international student families face difficulty communicating with their doctors during medical and health check-ups. Moreover, their inability to speak and read Korean prevents them from accessing basic policy and lifestyle information in Korea.

As a result, they lack information on national health insurance, employment, and other essential components of everyday life, and most of these families have to pay very high hospital fees for their first hospital visits.

This paper has limited its interviews with Vietnamese student families and has not researched a representative cross-section of all international student families in Korea. Therefore, future research is needed of international student families that apply both qualitative and quantitative methods to further discuss their difficulties and challenges during their lives and studies in Korea.

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