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AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF IMMIGRANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AND HEALTH INEQUITY POLICIES AMIDST THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN KOREA

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Abstract

The objective of the present study is to identify the relationship between health inequity policies and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was hypothesized that a positive significant relationship is found between health inequity policies and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this purpose, a survey was administered to 327 foreigners in Korea. The collected data were analyzed by using Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, one-way ANOVA, and independent samples t-test. Bivariate analysis results shed light that health inequity policies were correlated with social discrimination. Moreover, findings revealed that health inequity policies toward ethnic groups are a predictor power of social discrimination. This study contributes that initiatives for equal opportunities for healthcare by the Korean government and rights for immigrants will reduce social discrimination while esteemed cultural diversity builds a healthy environment in an emerging multicultural society. The present study has implications for scholars, researchers, and policymakers interested in foreigners' perceptions about the Korean government's health policies for immigrants in Korea during a public health crisis.

Keywords

Coronavirus, Ethnic Groups, Funds, Inequity Policies, Social Discrimination



1. Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has driven nations across the globe to square up institutional

discrimination and social discrimination in multicultural societies including the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Hong Kong,

and South Korea (hereafter Korea). The emerging multicultural society of Korea has seen a rise toward foreigners in a decade before the pandemic. This multiculturalism is the result of the influx of increasing immigrants, imported labor, students, migrants, and minority groups. As of October 2020, some 2.07 million foreigners are staying in Korea, including 918,000 Chinese, 211,000 Vietnamese, 184,000 Thais, 50,500 Filipino, (Yon-se, 2021, February 21), and 13,000 Pakistani (Abrar 2019, December 25) among others. Based on extensive desk research, Korea as a homogeneous country of 51 million people depicts conformity as a cultural guiding principle and resultantly gives little space to a concept of integration (Park 2020, November 17). Racial discrimination is common around East Asia and Korea is no exemption in this regard. In this sense, foreigners' perspectives about multiculturalism have significance in a multicultural society. The great outbreak of the novel virus in Korea opens the door for further analysis and also demonstrates significant changes in foreigners' perspectives about native Koreans behavioral manifestations ranging from negative to indifferent as well as violation of human rights during the COVID-19 crisis through health inequity policies by the authorities. Historically, Korea has not been a primary destination for immigration and to accept foreigners of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Korean people prefer to be ethnic Korean and hold a less discriminated attitude towards those who maintained their Korean language (North Korean, ethnic Korean from China; Joseonjok). Besides, immigrants (short-term

migration) from Europe are treated fairly as they provide services in academia (Rich, Brueggemann, Bison, & King 2020, October 5), and also their arrival is not perceived to adjust in Korea. In the last decade, more cultural diversity was observed in the country due to transnational businessmen, emerging education hubs, the results of marriage, and a growing number of refugees applying for asylum. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, many changes have been made in transnational movements as well as policies and administrative orders for foreigners in Korea like other multicultural societies. Drive the point home, natural disasters, pandemics, and epidemics are always a great threat to international security and accelerate global challenges. To address these global security problems, bilateral, mutual, and transnational cooperation plays a pivotal role. In doing so, advanced states and multicultural societies place health diplomacy on a high level in the development of foreign policy and capture geopolitical influence. In this context, the outbreak of COVID-19 has devastated human lives, livelihood, and slowed down the mobility of migrants across the borders. It has severely affected the global economy and plunged the majority of nations into the worst recession. According to the International Migration 2020 Highlight's report, the pandemic may have disrupted the growth of transnational populations by some two million by mid-2020 (United Nations 2021). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) notes the global economy has diminished by 4.4% in 2020 (Jones, Palumbo, & Brown, 2020, January 24). Korea is among the

first states to be affected by the coronavirus and also effectively contained the spread of the novel virus, though foreign labor shortage has hit its economy due to the closure of borders. The outbreak of the pandemic forced the government and health authorities to guide the public and respond with proactive measures. The population boom of foreigners in Korea is required to amend health policies during public health crises for the protection and safety of citizens. The transnational communities having different races, ethnicity, and culture have been increasing in the country over the last two decades. Despite being kind to foreigners and advanced in unanticipated manners; Koreans perceived that they are not exceptional in regard to racial discrimination against foreigners. Thus, Korea's emergence as a multicultural society provides a prima facie floor in reference to assess foreigners' perceptions of Korean people's behavioral manifestation, the administrative orders, and health policies for foreigners through the lens of discrimination. Amid the pandemic, a hotly debated issue is Koreans' attitude that appears to vary with different nationalities and races; whereas health inequity policies and rules increase social discrimination practices towards foreigners. Foreigners' perspectives on Koreans' behavioral manifestation of social discrimination are achieving attention due to demographic change and the Korean companies' demand regarding the pool of foreign workforce. A number of survey-based research has been conducted on Koreans' attitudes towards international immigrants in years, but a few focus on foreigners' perceptions of health

policies and their relationship to social discrimination during the virus spread. This study aims to assess foreigners' perceptions on determinants of health policies and social discrimination by collecting the opinions of the largest ethnic group Chinese, large ethnic group Filipino, and the smallest ethnic group Pakistani. The purpose behind the choice of these three groups is to assess different ethnic groups' perceptions by their number and their cultural differences about health inequity policies and Koreans attitude formation amid the global health crisis. The structure of this paper is as follows: first, it provides contexts with a brief review of health policies, the behavioral manifestation of discrimination, and racial discrimination toward foreigners during the pandemic in a detailed way; second, it discusses previous research review third, provides the survey data comprising the survey items significant for this study; fourth, presents discussions, and gives a conclusion at the end.

1.1. Health Inequity Policies for Foreigners during COVID-19

Korea has experienced three waves of COVID-19 pandemic since it saw the first coronavirus confirmed patient (February 2020 (176 days), August (120 days), and end of December (70-120 days) (Arin 2021, February 17). Though the spread of the novel virus was suppressed and controlled in March and August, it spread more at the end of 2020. Korea's digital technology practices enable to trace transmission routes of a confirmed patient with COVID-19. Whereas, multilevel factors have been characterized to control the spread of the

novel virus that include preventive health recommendation by experts, public cooperation, and measures taken by the government, testing at an early stage, immediate activation of the national response protocols, cooperation among state and non-state actors to ensure large-scale treatment systems (Paek & Hove, 2021). Amid a recent spike in new infection cases during the inoculation campaign and a sudden massive increase in imported cases, the government imposed restrictions on foreigners traveling to Korea. To contain the contagious infections and prioritize the Koreans health safety, the government held a policy against foreigners and limited their access to publicly provided face masks. The authorities argued that the decision was to “prevent non-Koreans whose stays are short from purchasing masks” (Kim 2020, July 14). Even tax-payer foreigners and fiscal contributors were excluded under this policy (Hyun-ju 2020, May 10). Later, the government implemented a new policy for non-Koreans; each resident particularly registered with Korea’s National Health Insurance Service (NHI) can purchase only two masks per week (Min, 2020, March 10). Due to a surge in imported cases, an entry ban was imposed on foreigners that went into effect from February 04, 2020. Foreigners, who have visited China’s Hubei Province in the past two weeks, would not enter Korea. Whereas, Koreans would not bar and spend 14 days in quarantine upon reentry (Hyelin & Hana, 2020, February 03). Furthermore, to curb the spread of the novel virus, Korea extended travel bans on high-risk states that included Bangladesh, Pakistan, Kazakhstan,

Kyrgyzstan, the Philippines, and Uzbekistan (Yonhap News Agency, 2020, July 27). To control the infectious disease amid a spike in the newly confirmed patients from abroad, the government amended the law to receive treatment fees and medical bills from COVID-19 infected inbound foreigners (Yonhap 2020, July 29). Moreover, health authorities took decisive measures for quarantine breakers, as “Foreign nationals will be forcibly repatriated and Korean citizens will be reported to police for due penalties and lose financial support provided for those whose faithfully implemented a 14-day quarantine” (Shin 2020, March 26). The economic effects of COVID-19 have brought changes in the government policies as they aimed to benefit the Koreans and announced discriminatory administrative orders for non-Koreans. As a consequence, a strong backlash against discriminatory measures is seen by the foreign community, media, and embassies; and it resulted to rescind or revise the policies for foreigners. Due to a prolonged health crisis, the Korean government and municipalities introduced emergency funds to support people in an attempt to overcome economic effects by excluding foreigners, except a few local governments that included foreigners in the subsidy plan. In line with measures, strong evidence of institutional discrimination has been observed by the Seoul and Gyeonggi Provincial governments amid the pandemic. In March, both governments issued an administrative order for non-Korean nationals including foreign academic staff, media professionals, and business workers to undergo

mandatory COVID-19 checks. This order was applied to some 60,000 to get a coronavirus test by the end of March in an effort to prevent the rapid virus from spread among foreign factory employees (Hyun-Jae & Eun-joo 2021, March 19). The administrative order was greatly criticized by the broad cross-section of the foreign community, academicians, and Korean political circle as Koreans were excluded from this mandatory test. In regard to eliminating discrimination toward expat community by local governments, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun said, “health authorities and local governments implement antivirus measures with a level of sensitivity so that not only foreigners but also Korean nationals don’t feel discriminated against” (Yonhap News Agency, 2021, March 22). Likewise, Democratic Party lawmaker Lee Sang-min condemned the COVID testing order; he said “this is a ridiculous and unfair act of racial discrimination against foreigners. It’s a violation of human rights that could make us an international disgrace... we need to pass an equal treatment law or an anti-discrimination law” (Young-ji, 2021). Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol said it is “concerns of discrimination and human rights violation” and stressed that government strives to save all citizens from contagious disease without discrimination (KBS World 2021, March 29). To prevent the spread of the dangerous infectious novel virus, Korea has launched a vaccine campaign on February 26. Though, the country has effectively contained the virus spread in comparison to other advanced countries like the US, UK, and Germany; but it delayed launch to

inoculation. In response to criticism over a delay, Health Ministry spokesperson Son Young-rae says that vaccine safety must see for citizens’ health before administering the shots, “it would be best to avoid getting the shots first, it is a relief to have one or two months to monitor their effects in other countries”(KBS World 2020, December 23). The government plans to roll out free vaccination to foreigners registered on the National Health Insurance Service (Hyo-Jin, 2021, February 19).

1.2. Koreans’ Behavioral Manifestation of Racial Discrimination

National and local cultures are recognized by the shared values, heroes, and traditions of a community in a country. Cultural dimensions are associated with several kinds of prejudices and biases. Basically, discrimination is a critical criterion of social enclosure that plays an important role to perceive people’s opinions, views, and treatment of others. Behavioral manifestation of discrimination can be seen in various shapes such as overt and covert. However, formal discrimination is defined as “explicit behaviors that are legally sanctioned (e.g., decisions regarding hiring, promoting, and firing employees); and interpersonal discrimination, defined as a less explicit form of discrimination, which may be exhibited intentionally and involves more subtle interpersonal cues (e.g., eye contact, lack of warmth, shortened interaction length).” Self-reports of prejudice are referred to the explicit expression of prejudicial attitudes and in the form of reaction times, it is contrasted with implicit prejudice (Dipboye & Colella 2005, 438). Korea is emerging

as a multi-ethnic society due to the growing number of immigrants. Considering the critical social issues such as declining birth rate, low fertility, aging population, the crisis of families, and shortage of domestic workforce; foreign workers and immigrants are indispensable in the country. Despite the dire needs of imported labor and immigrants in prevalent circumstances, they are treated in a different and discriminatory manner. Native Koreans' racial discrimination with foreigners and discriminatory orders by local government during the pandemic contribute to social and institutional discriminatory practices and are a negative indicator in an emerging multicultural society. In this respect, a few facts of racial discrimination cases will expose the determinants of Koreans' attitudes towards foreigners. Mostly native Koreans' racist discrimination has been seen against immigrants from developing countries relative to European and developed countries. Anti-immigration sentiments appear toward poor nations as Korean people welcome immigrants from advanced countries. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, hate speech and racist narratives against immigrants were disseminated through newspapers, the internet, and social media. Though, the rise of anti-China sentiments was prevalent in the last few years but reached a peak from 31 percent in 2002 to 75 percent in 2020 (Kim 2021, April 5). Confronting uncertain circumstances of the outbreak of pandemic in Korea, while considering the COVID-19 originated in China, xenophobic statements against Chinese came from Korean workers and

Korean people that include the delivery ban in high rate Chinese areas, displaying banners "no Chinese entry", "no Chinese allowed", media's depiction "hate china virus", protest activities in front of Chinese Embassy in Seoul to disclose more information on "the horrifying, murderous Wuhan pneumonia", and an online petition to the presidential office for entry ban by some 680,000 Koreans (Suzuki, 2020, February 10). Within the context of employer-worker relations, racial discrimination toward foreigners has been reported at workplaces during the pandemic. In many cases, more social contacts have demonstrated a high level of social discrimination than their national identity of foreign residents and this racial discrimination accumulates across workplaces. Foreign workers have included the largest class of foreign residents. But, they are derived from the fundamental right to move to other workplaces without the consent of the ex-head. They suffer from exploitation, strong restrictions, and discrimination in factories and industries. They are bonded to their employers as they can change a job with permission of ex-employers excluding Koreans. Foreign workers help their families in their home country, such discriminatory practices compel them to go back to their country or stay illegally in Korea. There is no legal protection against racial discrimination measures due to the absence of anti-discriminatory legislation in the country.

However, health inequity policies by the government increase the racial discrimination by natives across ethnic groups in Korea amidst the virus spread.

2. Literature Review

Multiculturalism alludes to the actuality of difference and unequal power relations among all residents in reference to race, ethnicity, religion, geographical distinction, and cultural aspects that diverge from dominant, ‘often racialized norms’ (Clayton, 2020: 211). Simultaneously, racial discrimination means “any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, or any other field of public life” (Lauren, 1988: 230). Taken as a whole, if there are rules and laws in the country then the government can take dynamic steps to reduce social discrimination. In the absence of laws, the government cannot punish people. Laws define what is valued and acceptable in the culture and can influence people’s behavior without the implementation of passed laws (Dipboye & Colella, 2005: 432). However, it becomes critical if government formulates discriminatory health policies for ethnic groups during a pandemic, particularly in an emerging multicultural society. In this respect, racial/cultural difference is the driving force behind the prejudiced attitude. Anti-discrimination with foreigners cannot be resumed merely from the existence of laws but the enforcement of equal laws is a crucial factor in this regard. By outlining the fact, “public health emergencies often lead to stigma and discrimination towards certain communities and

groups or affected persons” (World Health Organization 2020, April 21). In regard to unpacking the racial discrimination in multicultural societies during the COVID-19 crisis, different channels raise voices about natives’ rising racism and institutional discrimination toward immigrants. A number of studies show that foreign nationals roundly criticized an increase in racial discrimination and xenophobia in Korea (National Human Rights Commission of Korea, Report 2020; Hyun-ju, 2020; Rich, Bison, & Kozovic, 2020; McPherson, 2020). However, a handful of research can be found on the government’s health policies for expats during the pandemic. It is conclusively accepted that Coronavirus is a public health emergency. Taking it into consideration, it exposes institutional discrimination and social discrimination by implementing health inequity policies for foreigners that demonstrate human rights violations. For many years, human rights activists in Korea have been supporting abolishing comprehensive discrimination based on gender, language, age, disability, nationality, physical appearance, sexual orientation, and any other form. On the other side, seven attempts to establish an anti-discrimination law have been made in the National Assembly, but all efforts were in vain due to “conservative” Christian groups’ opposition to homosexuality. In June 2020, Justice Party has proposed a bill in National Assembly toward anti-discrimination legislation. Party’s Rep. Jang Hye-young said “it was needed now more than ever, especially in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world when inequality striking the socially vulnerable will

loom ever larger” (Da-min 2020, July 15). But, decade-long discussions on bans discrimination remain halted in the Legislation and Judiciary Committee without taking into any consideration (Jin-hye 2021, March 5). It is important to note that Korea has not established comprehensive bans discrimination legislation, even provisions against social discrimination have not been executed effectively by the competent authorities but also health inequity policies are adopted during the novel virus spread. In this connection, this study examines the government’s inequity health policies and Korean people’s attitude formation of racial discrimination by analyzing sanctions and their effects on foreigners that reflect social discrimination towards them through qualitative literature review and by empirical analysis of ethnic groups that include Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani foreign nationals in Korea. To test the relationship between health policies and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic, the following hypotheses were established:

H1: There is a relationship between health inequity policies and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H2: Health inequity policies toward ethnic groups are likely to be a predictor of social discrimination in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H3: There is a difference in demographic constructs and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H4: There is a difference across ethnic groups

toward health policies and social discrimination in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H5: There is a gender difference in health inequity policies across different ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

H6: There is a gender difference in social discrimination across different ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Sample and Study Site

The sample was comprised of 327 respondents (Chinese, n=109; Filipino, n=109; & Pakistani n=109). All the respondents who participated in the survey are staying in Korea.

3.2. Parameters for Data Collection

An online survey technique was used to collect data. The effort was made to collect data from Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani foreign nationals who are currently residing in Korea. First, the survey was developed in English. Since all Chinese and Pakistani nationals are not fully conversant with the English language, a native version of questions in the Chinese language and Urdu language was also developed. The questionnaire was comprised of an introduction informing respondents about the objective of the study. The questionnaire consisted of demographic characteristics of the respondents and constructs health policies and social discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea. Questions about health policies were developed by the Author using journal articles and newspapers. However, items on social discrimination have been utilized from In-Jin

Joon, Young-Ho Song, and Young-Joon Bae’s work “South Koreans’ attitudes toward foreigners, minorities and multiculturalism” who used an extensive sample survey to examine native Koreans’ notions about foreigners. Contrary, the present study conducted a survey on foreigners to analyze their perceptions towards native Koreans. An online survey questionnaire was conducted by using Google Forms and disseminated via email, WhatsApp, and social media forum. A total of N=327 responses were collected and imported to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for the statistical analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis/ Measurement Model

The survey included major items for a clear understanding of foreigners’ perceptions of health policies devised by the Korean government and social discrimination toward foreigners in Korea amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Reliability analysis

was used to find Cronbach’s Alpha. An acceptable level of internal consistency of the questionnaire was indicated ($\alpha=.705$) for the construct health policies and ($\alpha=.751$) for the construct social discrimination. The survey comprised of three sections. In the first section, target populations were asked about their demographic information. In the second section, participants indicated their perceptions of health policies, and the third section was based on items of social discrimination. All the items were measured using 3-point Likert Scale (Yes=3, No=2, May be=1). Descriptive statistical analysis was used to determine the mean and standard deviation. The measurement method used bivariate analysis, multiple regression analysis, one-way ANOVA to compare mean scores of ethnic groups; and Independent samples t-test was used to see the difference of perceptions between respondents based on their gender.

4. Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the sample (N=327)

Variables	Category	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	192	59
	Female	135	41
Age (in years)	21-30	98	30
	31-40	180	55
	41-50	43	13
	More than 50	6	2
Education Level	High School	63	19
	Undergraduate	79	24
	Master	123	38
	Graduate	47	14
	Postgraduate	15	5
Marital Status	Married	173	53
	Single	154	47
Occupation	Employed Full-Time	100	30.6
	Employed Part-Time	28	8.6

	Self-employed	49	15
	Seeking Opportunities	51	15.6
	Student	99	30.2
Origin of Country	China	109	33.3
	Philippines	109	33.3
	Pakistan	109	33.3

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics represented the study sample; there were more male 59 % ($n=192$) than female 41% ($n=135$). Of the total ($N=327$), more than half respondents 55% ($n=180$) were between the age range of 31-40, while 30% ($n=98$) between the age range of 21-30, 13% ($n=43$) between the age range of 41-50, and only 2% ($n=6$) between the age range of more than 50. According to educational level, 38% respondents ($n=123$) had a master degree, respondents 24% ($n=79$) had an undergraduate degree, 19% ($n=63$) had a high school education, 14% ($n=47$) had a graduate degree, and 5% ($n=15$)

had a postgraduate qualification level. There were 53% ($n=173$) married respondents while 47% ($n=154$) un-married respondents who participated in the survey. In regard to employment level, 30.6% ($n=100$) respondents were employed full-time, 30.2% ($n=99$) were students, 15.6% ($n=51$) seeking opportunities, 15% ($n=49$) self-employed, and 8.6% ($n=28$) employed part-time respectively. In terms of respondents' origin of country, a total number of $N=327$ respondents were accessed to capture their perceptions belong to China 33.3% ($n=109$), Philippines 33.3% ($n=109$), and Pakistan 33.3% ($n=73$).

Table 2: Reliability Coefficient of Constructs Social Discrimination and Health Policies

	M	SD	Cronbach's α
Health Policies	9.97	2.86	.705
Free vaccination to foreigners provides equal health opportunities during the pandemic	3.44	1.03	.705
Ethnic groups did not receive the disaster funds like Koreans	3.21	1.17	.590
Health policies by the Korean government prohibits discrimination towards foreigners	3.32	1.16	.588
Social Discrimination	18.89	3.62	.751
Koreans are kind towards ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic	4.03	.86	.755
Korean have different attitude towards different nationalities	3.93	.91	.716
Korean have different attitude towards different races	3.66	.92	.695
Korean behave better with immigrants from developed countries	3.59	.94	.699
Korean believe that immigrants are contributing in economic development	3.66	.94	.731

Table 3: Pearson Correlation of study variables Social Discrimination, Demographic Characteristics, and Health Policies (N=327)

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Social Discrimination	1							
Gender	-.112*	1						
Age	.032	.113*	1					
Education	-.075	.164**	.105	1				
Marital status	-.076**	.043	-.375**	.069	1			
Employment status	-.121*	.146**	-.204**	.225**	.308**	1		
Country	.185**	-.205**	.204**	.172**	.143**	-	1	
Health policies	.455**	-.097	.079	-.142*	-.269**	-.107	-.063	1

Table 3 shows that social discrimination correlation was found to be negatively statistically significant to gender ($r= -.112^*$, $p=.043$), insignificant to education ($r= -.075$, $p=.176$), and marital status ($r=-.076^{**}$, $p=.170$), positively insignificant to age ($r=.032$, $p=.567$), negatively statistically significant to employment status ($r=-.121^*$, $p=.029$), and positively highly significant to country ($r=-.185^{**}$, $p=.001$), and health policies

($r=.455^{**}$, $p=.001$). These results supported the hypotheses showing that social discrimination has a relationship with health policies across different ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, these findings suggest that health inequity policies increase social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis for Constructs health policies and Demographic Characteristics predicting Social Discrimination (N=327)

Predictors	B	Std. Error	β	Sig
Constant	6.36	.879		.001
Country	.63	.150	.227	.001
Health Policies	.64	.069	.468	.001
R	.513			
R ²	.264			
F	16.305			

Table 4 shows that construct country and health policies indicated highly significant predictive powers of social discrimination. H1 and H2 were supported as finding indicated that a country and

health inequity policy toward ethnic groups is a predictor of social discrimination in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5: Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Δ r ²	Standard error of the estimate
1	.254	.064	.047	.064	2.241
2	.513	.264	.247	.199	1.991

Table 5 shows that demographic constructs indicated 6.4% changes in social discrimination, $F=3.676$, $p<.002$ and construct health policies 26.4% changes in social discrimination, $F=16.305$, $p<.001^{**}$. Finding approved that health policies more contributed to increase social discrimination relative to country.

Table 6: Coefficients

Model	Coefficients	Standard error	Beta	t-value	p-value
M1					
Constant	11.798	.739		15.97	.001**
Gender	-.155	.271	-.033	-.575	.566
Age	-.172	.207	-.052	-.831	.407
Education	-.160	.121	-.076	-1.324	.186
Marital status	-.435	.287	-.095	-1.516	.131
Employment status	-.113	.083	-.081	-1.360	.175
Country	.604	.168	.215	3.585	.001**
M2					
Constant	6.365	.879		7.238	.001**
Gender	.009	.241	.002	.037	.970
Age	-.189	.184	-.058	-1.028	.305
Education	-.051	.108	-.024	-.470	.638
Marital status	.111	.262	-.024	.422	.673
Employment status	-.119	.074	-.085	-1.618	.107
Country	.637	.150	.227	4.253	.001**
Health Policies	.640	.069	.468	9.285	.001**

Table 6 shows that hierarchical regression analysis was employed to obtain the best model fit. Results indicated that M₁ standardized coefficients for demographic variable country significant among other constructs gender, age, education status, marital status, and employment status. However, M₂ shows the standardized coefficients for predictor

health policies indicated highly significant construct than country to predict social discrimination. Thus, overall findings showed country and health policies highly statistically significant predictors of social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 7: One-Way Analysis on health policies and social discrimination (N=327)

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	P
Health Policies					
Between Groups	55.363	2	27.682	10.391	.001
Within Groups	863.156	324	2.664		
Total	918.520	328			
Social discrimination					
Between Groups	76.740	2	38.370	7.580	.001
Within Groups	640.037	324	5.062		
Total	1716.777	326			

Table 7 shows that ethnic groups Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani indicated a highly significant contributory factor for health policies, $F(2, 324) = 10.391$ $p < .001$; and significant contributory

factor for foreigners perceptions on social discrimination in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic, $F(2, 324) = 7.580$ $p < .001$.

Table 8: Mean and SD of the scores of ethnic groups about health policies and social discrimination as reported by Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani (N=327)

Groups	N	M	SD
Health policies			
China	109	6.24	1.70
Pakistan	109	6.96	1.42
Filipino	109	5.99	1.75
Social discrimination			
China	109	10.37	2.53
Pakistan	109	11.39	2.33
Filipino	109	11.41	1.82

Table 8 shows that Chinese and Pakistani had insignificant difference in mean scores ($M = 6.24$, $SD = 1.70$) and ($M = 6.96$, $SD = 1.42$) as compared to Filipino ($M = 5.99$, $SD = 1.75$) on health policies. Results also show that a Pakistani and Filipino's perception on social discrimination was significantly different from Chinese. Pakistani and Filipino had higher mean scores ($M = 11.39$, $SD =$

2.33) and ($M = 11.41$, $SD = 1.82$) than Chinese ($M = 10.37$, $SD = 2.53$).

It supported H4 that there is a difference across ethnic groups toward health policies and social discrimination in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic. It concludes that foreigners perceive that Koreans have different attitude towards different foreign nationals.

Table 9: Independent samples t-test social discrimination and health inequity policies (N=327)

Variables	Male (n=192)		Female (n=135)		T	p	95%CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Health policies	6.53	1.48	6.20	1.90	1.751	.081	-.040	.698	0.19
Social discrimination	11.27	2.18	10.75	2.41	2.029	.043	.0158	1.025	0.22

Table 9 shows that independent-samples t-test was used for differences of opinions between respondents based on their gender. The results indicated that there were insignificant differences in the mean scores of male ($M=6.53$, $SD=1.48$) and female respondents ($M=6.20$, $SD=1.90$) on health policies; $t(327)=1.751$, $p=.081$ with low effect size, Cohen's $d=0.19$. Results also indicated significant difference in the mean scores of male ($M=11.27$, $SD=2.18$) and female respondents ($M=10.75$,

5. Discussions

To analyze the relationship and association in the extent of health inequity policies and racial discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic; the survey results indicated that foreign residents Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani's perceptions range from positive, negative, and indifferent on government's health policies that bring attention towards racial discrimination towards expats. Along a similar vein, the findings reveal that effects of legal sanctions demonstrate formal discrimination as a significant contributory factor while interpersonal discrimination reflects a less significant contributory factor by Koreans' social discriminatory attitude toward foreigners. Immigrants from three ethnic groups perceive a different level of attitude by Korean towards multi-racial and multi-cultural communities; formal discrimination reflects the strict rules by the government authorities as a highly significant contributory factor and also affects the Koreans' behavioral manifestation toward foreigners.

$SD=2.41$) about social discrimination; $t(327)=2.029$, $p=.043$ with low effect size, Cohen's $d=0.22$. H5 was not supported as it indicated that males and females had the same perceptions on health policies across different ethnic groups during the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea. However, H6 was supported as it hypothesized that there was a gender difference in social discrimination across different ethnic groups in Korea during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This finding is in line with that government's inequity policies across expats have a relationship with racial discrimination particularly health policies amidst the public health emergency in Korea. However, revisions in policies and laws by the institutions could ultimately lead to the embrace of fair and equitable treatment by natives and would influence their attitudes toward expat community.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study makes substantial efforts to assessing how and why Koreans treat in different ways with immigrants through multilevel facets of behavioral manifestation, health inequity policies devised by the government for foreigners, and their effects on Koreans' attitude formation of racial discrimination. Considering the health inequity policies for foreigners, authorities' discriminatory health policies for foreigners have been widely domestic and international condemnation and could result in widespread of a novel virus. Korean policymakers have adopted severe measures to control newly infected cases, aim for restraining imported cases, and showing non-cooperative

strategic behavior, particularly to get a mandatory covid test for foreigners. Administrative order by the Seoul Metropolitan government was roundly condemned by foreigners, embassies, media, and Korean lawmakers regarding mandatory virus tests or imposing a fine on foreign workers. As part of the government's efforts of anti-discrimination toward foreigners and increasing concerns on human rights violation, Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun remarked about the mass testing the campaign initiated by provincial governments, "health authorities and local governments implement antivirus measures with a level of sensitivity so that not only foreigners but also Korean nationals don't feel discriminated against" (Yonhap News Agency, 2021, March 22). The current governor of Gyeonggi province remarked to protect the human rights of the international immigrants as they are increasing due to the need for a workforce. Likewise, health officials criticized mandatory testing is based on nationality rather than the workplace (Tong-Hyung, 2021, March 19). By looking at the fact of health's safety, a few foreigners take the testing mandate as a requirement to control cluster infections and in compliance to health rules and they got test checks without resistance. Personal experience and economic development are indicators to change human attitudes. Foreigners condemn the Koreans' behavioral manifestation of racial discrimination and feel they are not concern about intolerance towards them. They are kind but behave differently with different nationalities and races. It is a known fact that cultural capacity building requires a systematic approach to establish social integration

and reduces social distance feeling in a multicultural society. With this in mind, Koreans' treatment of foreigners is also reflected by the host country's bonds with other countries and also by nation branding. It is important to take into consideration that many foreigners perceive that Koreans are different or prejudice against them due to the language barrier. So, learning Korean well would be helpful to communicate with them and to reduce social distancing feelings. Lou and Noels (2020) argue that language is a significant social marker for social categorization and local language proficiency is considered a consistently powerful attribute for immigrants. Given the local language as a key marker, Koreans avoid foreigners who lack language proficiency and it creates a negative impression or judgments on foreigners' part. In response to Koreans' unreasonable criticism and racial discrimination during the COVID-19, the government should take some important insights by revising its policies in order to reduce social discrimination and xenophobia toward foreigners. Policies regarding immigration have been achieving attention and growing in the country. Korea has set different standards and rules for immigrants during the pandemic. The Korean government imposed strict quarantine restrictions for expats relative to native Koreans coming from abroad. Furthermore, discriminatory practices at a critical moment appeared by the government, when a number of foreigners were left out of consideration from mask rationing and disaster relief funds. The administration's decision on limiting foreigners' access to face masks was not noticed by native Koreans; it reflected that discrimination is a natural

phenomenon and also associated to change the natives' attitudes toward minorities in Korea. Pandemics are the common enemy of human beings. Foreign residents with low wages were devastated by the loss of jobs. They support their families in their home country but the Korean government excluded them to receive relief funds. Foreigners see this measure as a violation of rights and the discriminatory line between foreigners and Koreans.

5.2. Practical Implications

Health inequity policies by the Korean government are overt and raise questions on the emerging multicultural society in Korea. But, change in policies for foreigners would provide a positive indication to leave a soft image of Korea by reducing racial discrimination, xenophobia, and protecting human rights. If government develops similar policies for foreigners amid the global health emergency, it may lead to a change in natives' behavioral manifestation toward expats and improve the national image and endure human rights protection. It would reflect institutional efforts to reduce discrimination between nationals and immigrants by passing laws against rights violations. A silver lining and glimmer of hope to foreigners could have the existence and enforcement of anti-discriminatory legislation. Korea is experiencing a rapidly aging population and reduction in birth rates, and its persistent need for inbound labor might reach 15 million immigrants by 2060 to strengthen its economy (Park, 2020). The Korean government should devise liberal policies in the context of a multicultural society. It also should work to

persuade Korean nationals to accept and support these policies taking into consideration the demographic crisis and need for a foreign workforce. Korea has a slow course to shift in rules and laws for equal rights for immigrants. The major modification should bring through the change in the education system, which builds unhealthy nationalism in citizens at the early stage of school and institute, fostering region-wide racism, and cultural ignorance caused by uniformity. Such issues create hostilities and prejudice against foreigners, illegal migrants, asylum seekers, women, and people from developing countries. Moreover, Korea's need for immigrants to sustain the economy requires passing a bill to protect anti-discrimination.

6. Conclusion

Koreans, an ethnically homogeneous nation is at the initial stage of becoming a multicultural society with self-contained people. Koreans' behavior towards foreigners tends to be negative and higher with the people from poor countries. Foreigners' perspectives indicated that Koreans are introverted to welcome non-Korean and their hostile feelings towards different ethnic groups are seen in day-to-day life. Their discriminatory practices are being highlighted by immigrants, NGOs, social media, and notably by the Korean political circle. On the part of the Korean government, revision in policies and protection of human rights would pave the way towards a positive change in natives' attitudes. The findings of this study shed light by reviewing the links between health inequity policies and social discrimination across ethnic groups in Korea during the public health crisis through the lenses of

Chinese, Filipino, and Pakistani nationals. Korean government's discriminatory health policies and natives' supremacist attitude of disdaining foreigners from developing countries reflects racial discrimination and human rights violation. Policies based on labor shortage imply attracting migrant workers but still, Koreans do not represent equality between natives and foreigners at workplaces during the pandemic. To this core, demographic crisis and need for the workforce are critical factors that demonstrate to revise the asymmetrical policies devised by the government, and it would change the Korean public attitudes towards foreigners. Moreover, if the government should strive to revise other policies and laws urging fair and equal treatment of all foreign residents during the pandemic. This study suggests that policymakers and authorities should bear in mind native Koreans' behavioral manifestation of discrimination in devising or revising a policy by the government. The need for imported labor requires rescinding discriminatory policies by the government as these legal sanctions affect to increase or reduce the explicit discriminatory attitude of natives towards foreigners.

7. Limitations of the Study

This study has relied on Chinese, Pakistani, and Filipino residents' perspectives on health policies by the Korean government amid the pandemic and natives' attitude formation of racial discrimination. Thus, the findings of this research could not be generalized with respect to all ethnic groups in Korea. For future studies, this study brings new insights and suggests the need to determine the foreigners' perceptions toward Korean attitude

formation and institutional efforts through the lenses of the largest population of foreign residents with cautious consideration to compare them with Korean perceptions toward foreigners in a multicultural Korean society.

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