

Commitment to Academic Exchanges in the Age of COVID-19: A Case Study of Arrival and Quarantine Experiences from the Republic of Korea

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ABSTRACT

The closure of university campuses and the suspension of international student mobility programs have been common as a result of COVID-19, though not all programs have closed their doors. In the Republic of Korea, the relatively successful management of the pandemic allowed borders to remain open, nor have any national lockdowns been incurred to date, making student mobility possible throughout the pandemic. This case study reports the arrival and quarantine experiences of 10 exchange students at a university in Seoul, Korea. Findings from interviews revealed eight major themes: (a) commitment to conducting the exchange, (b) re-appropriation of time and funds, (c) confusion, disorientation, and frustration, (d) inadequate preparation and misinformation, (e) mutual support and co-quarantining, (f) inaccessibility to local services, (g) dependence on local altruism, and (h) view of Korea as a responsible and safe country. Students' views and expectations of Korea as a safe study destination amid the pandemic were juxtaposed with decidedly difficult and tumultuous arrival experiences. Implications of these findings are discussed in terms of the academic exchange life cycle and the importance of resource and service accessibility amid new pandemic-based norms with the addition of a new exchange life cycle stage.

Keywords: global mobility, Korea, exchange students, quarantine, COVID-19

“It’s part of the game now; it’s the price to pay in order to have a world experience.”

INTRODUCTION

The closure of university campuses and suspension of mobility programs due to COVID-19 have been common worldwide since early 2020. However, in the Republic of Korea (hereafter Korea), the government’s response to the pandemic has largely been considered an exemplary response due to relatively rapid countermeasures such as quarantine, self-isolation, and contact-tracing policies in addition to easily accessible testing (Reis et al., 2020). To date, these interventions have subsequently enabled the country to avoid incurring national lockdowns or closed borders, unlike other countries around the world. Nevertheless, due to social distancing as the primary countermeasure against transmitting or contracting the novel coronavirus, universities transitioned to emergency remote teaching (ERT) in order to maintain educational continuity for students (Hodges et al., 2020). Further, international degree-seeking students, as well as short-term exchange students, were still allowed to come to campuses, with some small classes even still meeting in person. However, starting April 1st 2020, the Korean government started requiring quarantine-upon-arrival for both foreign nationals and citizens entering the country (Chen, 2020). While various obstacles are intrinsic to academic exchanges such as visa applications and unforeseen financial costs (van Aken, 2001) as well as a certain degree of friction from culture shock or homesickness (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sato & Hodge, 2015), these difficulties can be characterized as relatively minor (if not unexpected) hindrances (van Aken, 2001). Government-mandated and monitored quarantine-upon-arrival was an obstacle, like the pandemic, that no university was prepared for in Korea, nor was this a minor inconvenience. Moreover, given that academic exchanges are often short (e.g., a single semester) compared to degree-seeking students’ sojourns (Stewart, 2020), the added measure crowded and complicated an already busy and precarious exchange cycle. The decision, while understandable as a swift health and safety response, lacked detailed considerations for just how the policy would manifest in practice. It was not known in what ways it would affect international students, which annually numbered over 140,000 (NIIE, n.d.) prior to the pandemic. Despite the uncertainty of the new process and the certain difficulties that would likely occur therein, many short-term exchange students were still committed to conducting their exchanges.

Based on the government’s initial provisions, all foreign nationals would be required to stay at government-run quarantine facilities (typically commandeered hotels) for a fee of 1,400,000 KRW (100,000 KRW or roughly 90 USD per day) (see Yonhap, 2020). The fee was later raised to 2,100,000 KRW (presumably to deter travel without officially closing borders) as government-quarantine facilities started reaching capacity. In late July, this aspect of the policy was suddenly reversed, allowing some foreign nationals to quarantine using other accommodations, but the policy adjustment only introduced more ambiguity by stipulating a difference between long and short-term visa holders. Exactly what

visas were short or long-term was not clear. For example, many tourist visas (which would later come to be understood as short-term) can be longer (e.g., six months) than “long-term” exchange student visas; many exchange students often only study in residence for a single semester (Stewart, 2020). Further, exchange students had planned on using state-run facilities as a matter of convenience based on the initial policy statements from the government, embassies/consulates, and previous university correspondence. By this point in time, some exchange students were already in the air, at the airport, or due to depart within a matter of days (if not hours) without anywhere to stay. Failure to secure accommodations would result in being denied entry to the country and ultimately receiving orders of departure back to their countries of origin without having stepped foot outside of their port of entry. Though these kinds of policies and decisions were no doubt made in the best interest of public health and safety, the rushed nature brought about potentially disastrous consequences for individual students.

The pre-arrival stage of academic exchanges is dependent on receiving accurate information prior to arrival (Ammigan, 2019), as well as student satisfaction with academic and social life (Alemu & Cordier, 2017). Yet the unpredictable nature of the pandemic and constantly shifting/conflicting policies made providing accurate information in this stage of the exchange life cycle nearly impossible. Further, the emergence of state-mandated quarantines illustrated that the conventional academic exchange life cycle’s stages or phases (e.g., arrival/pre-arrival, arrival, induction and welcome, learning in the classroom, learning a new socio-cultural environment, and home country return) (see Abdullah et al., 2017; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016) were incomplete under pandemic conditions. Nevertheless, exchange students were still committed to conducting their exchanges despite awareness of this new requirement, in addition to being the first students en masse to go through the unknown process. Given this, we set out to investigate student motivations for conducting exchanges during the pandemic, as well as their experiences in quarantine.

RELATED LITERATURE

Long-Term International Mobility

International student mobility trends have changed over the last few decades (Chan, 2012). Conventional mobility patterns have viewed the movement from East to West (Kim et al., 2018) and/or South to North (Habib et al., 2014). However, intra-Asia mobility has emerged as a new mobility paradigm (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016). In the case of Korea, the number of international students has increased dramatically over the last 20 years from just a few thousand in 2000 (S. Lee, 2017) to now more than 100,000 concurrently enrolled per semester (Higher Education in Korea, n.d.) with the vast majority of students originating from China, Vietnam, Mongolia, and Japan (Krechetnikov & Pestereva, 2017). There are numerous reasons for this growth; local universities have modified/lowered entrance requirements in order to attract students from abroad (Byun & Kim, 2011, S. Lee, 2017, Park, 2019) and emphasis has been placed on increasing

recruiting targets due to the declining national birth rate (Alemu & Cordier, 2017). Further, there has been an increase in the availability of classes offered in English as an academic/international language (Chun et al., 2017), in addition to other government initiatives such as Brain Korea 21, Study Korea, and the World Class University project (Byun et al., 2013, Green, 2015) to facilitate recruitment and enrollment, as well as the allocation of funds for international student scholarships such as the Global Korea Scholarship (GKS) or the Korean Government Scholarship Program (KGSP) (Krechetnikov & Pestereva, 2017). However, the focus on degree-seeking students overshadows where this trend differs: short-term mobility (i.e., exchange, fee-paying study abroad, and free movers).

Short-Term International Mobility

In the case of exchange students, movement is largely from West and North to East (Stewart, 2020) and the motivations for exchange students to study in Korea are different from their degree-seeking counterparts (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). For example, although there are many motivations (i.e., new international and cross-cultural experiences) common to exchange students in general (see Ahmad & Buchanan, 2016; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), other Korea-specific pull factors such as awareness of/interest in Korea by means of popular media (i.e., K-pop, Hallyu) play a role in the decision to study abroad (Stewart, 2020). Nevertheless, prior research (i.e., Alemu & Cordier, 2017) has also shown that when the mobility differs by a particular characteristic (e.g., region of origin, student type) outcomes such as student satisfaction can be different. Given this, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that the student life cycle also takes on a different relevance given the comparatively short nature of exchange sojourns and higher intensity of the stages when compared to degree-seeking international students, especially when the already short life cycle is further complicated by quarantines.

The Student Life Cycle

The general student life cycle includes transitional phases where students select a study destination, head to the institution, complete their course of studies, and then ultimately graduate and move into graduate programs and/or the employment sector (Bates & Hayes, 2017). Academic exchanges, like the general student life cycle, involve a cyclical process of various intake/outtake stages and services (Carmona et al., 2018; Ploner, 2018). One key difference between the general student life cycle and that of the exchange student one, however, is that students transition back to their home universities to complete their course of studies in order to finish their academic careers. For students who decide to take up short-term international mobility, the exchange life cycle acts as a micro cycle with the larger overall one.

The Pre-Pandemic Academic Exchange Life Cycle

The exchange micro cycle's stages have been described in prior literature as pre-arrival, arrival, throughout, and after-mobility (Abdullah et al., 2017), as well as before arrival/pre-arrival, arrival, induction and welcome, learning in the classroom, learning a new socio-cultural environment, and home country return (Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016). Intertwined and overlapping all of these stages are various academic, linguistic, and sociocultural challenges that can make the process easier or harder for some students (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017). For example, whether or not students can adequately communicate in the local language may make these stages either more or less difficult. Often student satisfaction (and the likelihood to recommend the university to others) correlates with the positive/successful experiences that students have with pre-arrival, arrival, learning, living, and support services (Ammigan, 2019). Ammigan (2019) also noted that while arrival experiences (and induction/orientation) are important, "preparing international students on what to expect even before they reach their university can help them transition smoothly and settle quickly into their new environment" (p. 266).

Pre-Host Country Arrival

Pre-arrival preparation typically includes providing information about visas, housing, class registration, and health insurance along with students' admissions packets, as well as through existing online channels such as the international student section of a university's home page, or through social media platforms (Ammigan, 2019; Andrade, 2006; Yi, 2007). However, while presumably all universities provide this information, students may not necessarily utilize it or may receive information with varying degrees of credibility elsewhere (Alzougool et al., 2013), compounding incorrect assumptions, expectations, or misinformation (Chang et al., 2012). In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the half-life of pre-arrival information is increasingly short as policies continually shift as a function of the evolving and dynamic nature of the pandemic. Since quarantine policies from the government were (and still are) being drafted and implemented in response to current and emerging COVID conditions (see Yonhap, 2020), there remains significant confusion in terms of successfully navigating the quarantine process. Although the quarantine periods may be relatively short compared to the exchange itself, informing students of what to expect is crucially important (Perez-Encinas & Rodriguez-Pomeda, 2018) as the exchange is dependent on the successful starting and completion of quarantines.

Post-Host Country but Pre-Campus Arrival: Pandemic Quarantines

Extant literature, however, does not explicitly describe quarantines as an intermediary or interstitial stage between arrival to the country, and the arrival to campus; what considerations must be made or known for quarantines is not

particularly clear, nor is the impact on university stakeholders well understood. Given the dire consequences (fines and/or order of departure) of being ill informed or unprepared when quarantines are involved, we argue that quarantines, for better or worse, merit their own stage or sub stage in the exchange life cycle while COVID-19 (and other future pandemics) is present. In simpler terms, there is a new intermediary stage that is necessary and one that is in need of research, especially since it is recurring each semester at present. As a result, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What motivated students to pursue an academic exchange during the COVID-19 pandemic in Korea?
2. What was the quarantine experience like for exchange students in Korea?
3. What challenges exist for exchange students when conducting quarantines in Korea?

METHOD

Case Study

The case study method has been used in educational research to study individuals and the activities that take place within real-life settings (Merriam, 2009). Case studies also address descriptive and exploratory questions, as well as ones that typically begin with ‘what’ or ‘how’ (Yin, 2012). Further, Yin (2014) defined the case study as “an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a “case”), set within its real-world context” (p. 18). The “case” in this study was defined as exchange students who were required to complete a novel government-mandated two-week quarantine period upon arrival to Korea prior to arriving on campus for the start of their exchanges. Since international students can be typologically heterogeneous (e.g., long vs short-term, fee paying vs. exchange, program type, etc.), inclusion criteria required that students be enrolled at the university via an official bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or multilateral consortium agreement (e.g., CONASEP, ERASMUS+, UMAP). The units of analysis and observation were individual students.

Participants and Data Collection

This study was undertaken at a large, private research institute in northern Seoul during the Fall 2020 semester (early September to late December). The university has a student population of approximately 20,000, and 3,300 of whom are international; exchange students number from 300-500 each semester within the international student body (total exchange student enrollment for the semester was 106). Interviews consisted of 10 questions (with various sub questions) regarding their motivations for conducting an exchange during a pandemic, the quarantine experience upon arrival, and ultimately how students felt about the

extra costs associated with the process (e.g., time, effort, finances, stress, etc.). All students consented to being interviewed and were provided the interview questions beforehand to prepare any notes or questions if desired, and to encourage participation since English was a second (L2) language for most. Further, interviews were ultimately divided into two parts with the first occurring during or right after release from quarantine, and the second towards the end of the semester. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1. No incentives were offered for participation.

Table 1: Overview of Participants

	Gender	Age	Nationality	Study Level	Major	*Interview Location
1	F	24	France	BA	Digital Marketing	Quarantine
2	F	23	France	MA	Sustainability	Quarantine
3	F	30	Ireland	BA	Asian Studies	Campus
4	F	21	Sweden	BA	Computer Game Dev.	Campus
5	M	21	France	BA	Communication	Quarantine
6	F	20	France	BA	Korean Studies	Campus
7	M	28	Spain	BA	Translation/Interpretation	Campus
8	F	21	UK	BA	Psychology	Quarantine
9	F	21	France	BA	Korean Studies	Quarantine
10	F	21	France	MA	Political Science	Quarantine

Note. Total Fall 2020 semester exchange student enrollment was 106 students. *Second interviews were held on campus.

Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes with 60% being conducted on Zoom while students were still in quarantine, whereas the remainder were conducted on campus a few days after being released. Interviews followed an interview protocol and were transcribed after each session. All research activities were documented in a spreadsheet serving as an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to acquire a deeper retrospective on students' feelings about the exchange once settled in light of their quarantine experiences, we conducted a second interview about 10 weeks later during the last month of the semester. These lasted about 20 minutes each. In terms of epistemology, we took the interpretive, constructivist view where findings are a co-construction between the researcher and participants (Levers, 2013).

Data Analysis

Transcripts were added to an NVivo project file and data was analyzed by “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). After each interview was completed, we began coding transcripts independently using the constant comparison method, comparing data from each successive interview with previously established codes (Boeije, 2002). We then grouped related codes together to form larger categories, and then

categories were grouped to create themes, ultimately representing important and patterned responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We then discussed the categories and themes in terms of where our thoughts were similar or where they diverged until consensus was reached. Since we used the constant comparison method of coding, we were also guided by data saturation which was considered reached when there were no new significant codes derived from the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Homogenous groups can enable saturation relatively quickly (Guest et al., 2006) and saturation was considered reached at interview 7 since students had all mentioned perceiving Korea as a safe study destination amid the pandemic or being committed to their exchanges due to having limited opportunities to do so as second and third year (sophomore and junior) students, which then predictably appeared thereafter in subsequent interviews. Participants were fairly homogenous typologically (i.e., student type, age, gender, study level, exchange length, region of origin) in addition to going through the same administrative process upon arrival in Korea at the same port of entry (Incheon) and self-arranged quarantine location (Seoul). Data collection was discontinued after interview 10.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The major themes from our co-analysis ranged from students being motivated to conduct their exchange irrespective of the pandemic and viewing Korea as a safe study destination to the more jarring tumultuous experiences upon arrival. These are presented in detail in Table 2 along with representative student statements.

Exchange Commitment in Spite of Quarantines

Academic exchanges involve significant lead time, often at least a semester to a year in advance. Further, the timing of exchanges is precarious in the general academic life cycle (see Bates & Hayes, 2017); the need to delay or defer an exchange can make it impossible for a student to pursue it later. We have no doubt that many students who had planned on conducting exchanges were simply unable to do so due to lockdowns, program suspensions, health concerns, and added financial costs. Further, these students' home universities did not cancel their programs unlike others. Therefore, the commitment may simply be an extension of programs that were simply allowed to operate. Nevertheless, as Participant 1 (24, F, France) explained: "It's part of the game now; it's the price to pay in order to have a world experience." Students were candid in their assessment of the exchange in terms of costs vs. benefits, and felt that potential benefits outweighed any of the added financial costs, including taking courses remotely despite being on campus for an exchange. Residential distance education would normally seem like a contradiction yet the emergence of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as a response to the pandemic placed exchange students in a rather unique situation unlike most of their local host-university counterparts who could simply live at home (Stewart & Lowenthal, 2021a). Despite courses being conducted remotely, the way the online courses manifested (i.e., following the university schedule, largely synchronous, having synchronous pre-recorded lecture components that

Table 2: Major Themes

Theme	Description	Representative Statement
Conventional Exchange Motivations and Timing	Students applied for exchanges often one year in advance going through local and host-university selection and admissions. They still wanted to commit to the exchange as it would likely be their only chance given the inflexible nature of the preparation involved.	Okay. I wanted to do an exchange for one year. And then COVID happens, and I don't want to stop on my project because of COVID and I just want to live normally. It's why I did the exchange, I will do the exchange. And I just wanted to not give up.
Re-appropriation of Time and Funds	The added quarantine fees and extra time were not obstacles for students. They had budgeted for leisure travel/expenses and simply re-appropriated the funds to finance this new requirement. COVID-19 was responsible for the cancellation of other engagements, ironically affording students ample time to use for quarantine.	At the beginning, my plan was to travel in Asia, like during my summer and I couldn't do that, so I could just spend a bit extra [for quarantine] because I didn't spend anything for other travel.
Confusion, Disorientation, and Frustration	The lack of accurate information was particularly stressful and disorienting. Some students found themselves scrambling to book AirBnBs in order to pass through immigration, whereas others had some time to book them at airports in their home countries. Finding a host that would accept them on short notice for quarantine could be difficult and frustrating.	It was really stressful because I, the situation is unclear, you know, like I contacted and contacted the embassy, the French Embassy in South Korea and South Korean Embassy in France to have information details like, it was really unclear. So, I was really stressed.
Inadequate Preparation and Misinformation	Most students did not adequately prepare for food service in quarantine. Students assumed they would be able to use local food delivery apps without issue, or presumed they could, based on information from social media and local friends. None tested out apps before arriving.	At first, we didn't know what to do, we asked around in Facebook groups for expats. We ended up ordering with Emart and Gmarket.
Mutual Support and Co-Quarantining	Students stressed the importance of travelling and being able to quarantine together as means of physical, emotional, and mental support. Most of their experiences were positive as they were able to socialize during quarantine. However, they dreaded the thought of going through the whole process alone.	We have a lot of students from our school that are in Seoul, and they already finished their quarantines so we're texting with them seeing where they went and what they did and we tried to gather information for after quarantine.
Inaccessibility to Local Services	Students discovered that many basic but necessary functions such as food delivery, mobile payments, and internet fund transfers were inaccessible to them as foreigners due to not having a local government registration number, local bank accounts, or local cell service.	I actually had not considered doing that [testing out food delivery apps and payment methods prior to arrival] I maybe should have tried that, yeah, I just did not think of it.
Dependence on Hosts and Korean Friends	Students were heavily reliant on the kindness and willingness of their AirBnB hosts or Korean friends to order and pay for food on their behalf. Some even requested help from the university as there was no other way to get food beyond breaking quarantine. Not all AirBnB hosts were willing to help, however.	It was enjoyable and our AirBnB host was really nice. He was really helpful if we had a problem with a delivery man or a driver or somebody. We just kind of could call him so he could help us.
View of Korea as a Responsible and Safe Country	Students thought the risk of travel during the pandemic and spending time in a foreign country ultimately was "worth" it since students viewed Korea's response and management of the pandemic as responsible and safe compared to their home (i.e., western) countries.	Yeah, a lot, a lot, in the way of government handling and also the fact that the population is really respecting what they say and we just, we learned only a few days ago that the masks are mandatory, but everybody wears them. In France it's mandatory but nobody wears them so we were hoping that in Korea, we will have a very different experience.

counted as attendance) still required students to be in Korea, at the very least, to participate given time zone differences and complete some activities in person such as midterms and final exams (Stewart & Lowenthal, 2021b). These ERT course characteristics also necessitated that student journey to Korea, whereas other countries (e.g., China, the United States) only allowed students to attend classes online from abroad (Yildirim et al., 2021).

All participants explained how they had been saving or budgeting for their exchanges (including taking out loans) and that they had simply re-appropriated funds to cover the costs of quarantine. For example, rather than travel during the semester, those funds would simply be used to pay for quarantine costs. Since these participants were Europeans, they were also influenced by Korea's successful management of the pandemic. Participant 2 (F, 23, France) explained that "if they [Korea] had, like, locked down for two months, I wouldn't have taken the risk to come here honestly" and this sentiment was expressed by all participants. Due to the comparatively worse governmental responses and subsequent pandemic management in the West, these students were heavily influenced by their perception of Korea as a safe study destination, and operated under the assumption that it was better to be there than in Europe. Participant 3 (F, 30, Ireland) expressed feeling a quasi-survivor's guilt since she was worried about her family under lockdown in Ireland and England, whereas she was able to live a mostly normal life in Korea due to the different pandemic responses: "I will say that there is an element of while I'm over here I'm quite concerned about my family, like, I feel safe but I don't feel like they're safe."

The Quarantine Experience

For most, quarantines were a relatively painless experience however this process was more complex and difficult than had originally been anticipated. This was often dependent on whether or not they had assistance from local Korean friends or altruistic AirBnB hosts to accomplish certain things like getting food or supplies that students could not procure on their own as new arrivals lacking the requisite socio-cultural knowledge, and essential tools such as cell phones, local credit/debit cards, and local mobile phone numbers. During the day, some students tried to be productive and structure their time whereas others did not. Virtually all students stressed the importance of making the journey with friends and co-quarantining in a shared flat for mutual support:

I'm just so lucky that I had the opportunity to meet with my friends, because I could speak with them during the day, share my food or something like that. And if I, if I had to be alone, I think it'd be really, really worse. (Participant 2, F, 23, France)

These findings are not particularly surprising given that prior literature on academic life cycles have stressed the importance of having accurate information and resources (Andrade, 2006; Ammigan, 2019; Ploner, 2018; Yi, 2007), which

also relates to student satisfaction with their educational experience (Alemu & Cordier, 2017). Otherwise, daily routines were relatively monotonous by reporting health symptoms (e.g., fevers, coughing) via a mobile application to an official at a local health center at designated times twice daily. Students tried to take care of administrative tasks for home and host universities, watched movies and series on Netflix, played games, and contacted friends/family back home. Students, like Participant 4 (F, 21, Sweden) also described the potential for the loss of motivation due to the prolonged isolation: “After two days I got very lazy and like, just like looking at my phone and slept a lot and watched movies and stuff. So, it didn't go as planned.” International students often experience more mental health issues (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011; Forbes-Mewett, 2019) which serves to underscore the importance of providing support services during certain stages of the exchange life cycle to better support students through what can normally be a stressful process of acculturation (Echochard & Fotheringham, 2017). While mental health services for this kind of student population have traditionally been lacking (Forbes-Mewett, 2019), these are particularly crucial during crisis conditions such as the current pandemic. For many students, these issues surfaced later all over the world due to isolation and taking courses exclusively online (Stewart, 2021). Where quarantines became even more challenging and complex was food and housing issues.

Quarantine Challenges

Due to the sudden changes to the quarantine and housing policy from the government, 70% of students had to scramble to find accommodations via AirBnBs. While many were lucky with kind and helpful hosts, the trustworthiness of hosts/accommodations was less than desired at times. Participant 10 (21, F, France) shared that: “I had cockroaches in my AirBnB. I could not go outside, it was a studio, a small place. It was very humid. And because of that, yes, a lot of bugs.” With the exception of one student who brought two-weeks’ worth of food in a suitcase, there were significant problems with access to food delivery services since students did not have local bank accounts, debit/credit cards, government registration numbers, or phone service. Further, even if students were able to identify a platform that they could use to pay for food, their quarantine locations in Seoul were sometimes out of delivery service areas. Students had linguistic barriers for local delivery apps as well since these platforms do not typically have English language options with a few exceptions (e.g., Gmarket). They frequently had to ask their hosts (and at times the staff at the Office of International Affairs) for help in purchasing/delivering food, often repaying staff after quarantine or wiring money from bank accounts back home while in quarantine. Participant 7 (M, 28, Spain) summarized the general reason for this which was surprisingly just a lack of foresight:

I guess now in hindsight I should have checked before [coming]. But I just, yeah, I never thought about it. I never thought I would have any problem ordering food to be honest, it should be straightforward.

Other students were told through friends and acquaintances on social media that they would not have any problems, however this information was semi-inaccurate as it assumed they had local government registration numbers which would enable access to mobile payments, cell service, etc. Such scenarios highlight that though peers may have good intentions in sharing information, it is not necessarily authoritative or accurate when coming outside of university channels. These challenges are not unique to the pandemic but a common challenge in mobility cycles more generally (van Aken, 2001).

Implications

Universities may consider providing, even if at cost to students, quarantine housing and food services, which would solve many of the food and payment issues that students encountered in this study, as well as eliminating at least some of the stress and anxiety of quarantine. We recognize, however, that dormitories and other high-density residential housing options are not optimal quarantine locations due to the ease with which cluster infections can occur as a result of high foot traffic and proximity to others. Therefore, it is necessary to determine accessible (i.e., by location, language, payment method) food delivery and payment platforms that accept foreign credit and debit cards, as well identifying local constraints such as poor locations for food delivery from restaurants. For example, while some students stayed in neighborhoods near campus thinking it would be convenient, this turned out to be problematic for restaurant delivery service which was scarce. One local website allowed students to pay for food using foreign credit cards, but food items had to be bought in bulk which was not ideal for those conducting quarantine alone. In short, guidelines need to be developed and shared with students and exchange coordinators as a part of their pre-arrival materials (Ammigan, 2019), and more active virtual pre-arrival orientations may be necessary to advise students accordingly given the potential severity of complications as a function of a new stage emerging in the exchange life cycle. These considerations are particularly important since the very real possibility exists that even after arrival and initial quarantines are completed, nationwide or city lockdowns can occur which would re-create the same accessibility challenges anew. Furthermore, these challenges are likely to still occur as nations navigate the complex process of reopening their borders and unrestricted travel, and universities re-open campuses and resume student mobility. In this sense, a quarantine stage in the exchange student life cycle may be possible on multiple occasions, not just upon entry. As these interviews took place, more restrictive social distancing measures were put in place in Seoul (see Lee, 2020) due to a COVID-19 cluster infection just a few kilometers away from campus.

CONCLUSION

As the COVID-19 pandemic endures, there will be numerous challenges stemming from quarantines. International students around the world have been

caught between policies that have not accounted for their limited socio economic (housing, financial, linguistic) accessibility, in addition to students viewing certain study destinations as safe while not considering the hasty and incomplete nature of public health and safety policy decisions. This case study presents these challenges as experienced in Korea with lessons learned, and implications for other universities elsewhere in the world, especially as borders and campuses re-open. While students may have viewed Korea as a safe destination for study during the pandemic since borders remained open and campuses did not close, this optimism met a distinctly more chaotic and difficult reality upon arrival. The re-opening of borders and resuming mobility programs cannot simply equate to the return to pre-pandemic norms while the pandemic is ongoing, even where the pandemic has been managed relatively well. As other nations and campuses start to re-open, there will need to be additional measures taken and considerations made for how students participate in their educational experiences in light of both visible and invisible obstacles.

We believe these findings to be a valuable reference point as quarantine-upon-arrival is not the only context in which this study's implications can apply; the COVID-19 situation is fluid and regional or national lockdowns can potentially happen at any time, disproportionately disadvantaging an already vulnerable student population that has multiple identities as new arrivals, foreigners, and short-term sojourners. It also contributes to the literature on the academic exchange life cycle with the suggestion for adding a potential quarantine stage during pandemics, highlighting the complexity of positive student perceptions from abroad and the much more tumultuous reality locally as nations respond to and manage health crises differently. Nevertheless, findings need to be judiciously considered when applying suggestions for practice elsewhere, especially since this study investigated the motivations and experiences of students engaged in short-term mobility, all which have different contextual characteristics than their degree-seeking counterparts. Further, participants came from Europe which places their pre-Korea experiences with far worse COVID conditions and governmental responses, making their perceptions closely tied to these conditions. Future research is needed to determine the impacts of government quarantine policies in regard to financial, emotional, and psychological tolls, and how this affects student mobility and exchange programs moving forward, and whether or not exchanges are "worth it" in the age of COVID-19 (or any future pandemic).

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