

# FACTORS INFLUENCING VIETNAMESE STUDENTS' DECISION TO STUDY IN SOUTH KOREA

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(Received: February 20, 2024; Revised: April 08, 2024; Accepted: April 10, 2024)

**Abstract** - Vietnamese students have been encouraged to choose South Korea as their study abroad destination as a result of the rising popularity of Korean culture, technology, and science in Vietnam over the years. This study uses primary survey data from 161 Vietnamese studying in South Korea, according to the 5-level Likert scale, along with quantitative analysis techniques such as scale testing, exploratory factor analysis, and regression analysis. The analysis' findings indicate that there are seven aspects, including the training program, personal growth, language, career prospects, support, immigration prospects and cultural factor that influence Vietnamese students' decisions to study abroad in South Korea. In order to develop reasonable policies to entice Vietnamese students to study in South Korea, Korean training institutes and organizations that promote Korean education abroad can use the research results as a credible quantitative basis.

**Key words** - Decision to study in South Korea; push factor; pull factor; Vietnamese students.

## 1. Introduction

Without a doubt, the first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen a tremendous growth in demands for knowledge in all fields, from science and technology, environment to education, and so forth, with overarching goal of changing how we live as individuals and as a society, and maintaining this transformation. People, resources, and ideas are now more mobile as a result of globalization. This has had a significant impact on education and the role it needs to play in encouraging the growth of imaginative and knowledgeable individuals who can fully engage in a dynamic and changing environment. In fact, globalization has paved the way for the emergence of international student mobility and brought about remarkable revenues for both home and host countries. Globally, in 2016, USD 300 billion was the amount of revenue for estimated direct and indirect global economic gains from 5.1 million international students worldwide. By 2030, the number of study-abroad students is expected to increase to nearly 120 million students in higher education, showing a rise of 56% compared to that in 2015 [1]. Additionally, these students contribute greatly to the future highly-qualified human resources for host countries. For host universities and colleges, international students help bring reputation and prestige to the institutions as well-known ranking systems (i.e. Time Higher Education, or QS rankings) are using international students as indicators [2].

For their home countries, international students are a high-quality resource for national growth. With an increase in both number and levels of study such as doctorate, master and bachelor, students who return after acquiring

knowledge and skills from studying overseas will directly contribute to companies and agencies where they used to work before the sabbatical leave, contributing to the overall development of various fields, and to the country's economic development and people-to-people diplomacy [3]. As those who are exposed to foreign educational environment and political ideology during studying abroad, they will bring back ideas about a quality political institution upon returning home, thus increasing participation in the political system of their home country. In addition, international students also play an important role in landmark research and inventions, commercializing research-based ideas into valuable businesses and products, contributing to economic development as well as overall development of the country [4].

Viet Nam is one of the most populous countries in the world, with around 99.46 million people in 2022 [5]. In terms of student mobility, the past two decades have witnessed a significant increase in the number of Vietnamese students studying abroad. Viet Nam became the 4th country of origin for international students in 2018 [6]. According to the Viet Nam Ministry of Education and Training, there were approximately 190,000 Vietnamese students studying overseas in the 2019-2020 academic year, which showed an increase of 15% over 2013 [7]. The top five host countries for Vietnamese students are Japan, the U.S., Australia, South Korea, and France, with 108,527 students [6]. The increase in Vietnamese student mobility can be explained by the expansion of Viet Nam's bilateral and multilateral relations with countries around the world. Furthermore, the quantity of Vietnamese students going overseas is expected to grow as families increase their household income and would like to send children abroad to acquire the best educational chances, and enhance necessary skills and knowledge [7].

As stated above, South Korea is currently one of the countries attracting many students from Viet Nam. As a country that attaches great importance to education and with the top education quality in the world, South Korea has up to 70% of the population aged 24-35 completing university programs. According to the 2019 report of The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) on education index for the future (Worldwide Educating for the Future Index 2019 scores), South Korea ranked 13th out of 50 countries assessed, surpassing the U.S. (22nd) [8]. Over the course of 30-year development, South Korea-Viet Nam diplomatic relations have been elevated to a strategic partnership, in which education is an area of focus for both sides. Viet Nam and South Korea consider international education to be an

important component in promoting mutual diplomatic relations. In 2013, Vietnamese students in Korea were 3000, which had increased over 20 times, reaching 59,876 in 2021, accounting for 37.6% of the total number of international students in South Korea, surpassing China with 32.1% [9]. With the goal of increasing the number of international students in South Korea to 200,000 by 2023, the number of Vietnamese students choosing South Korea is also expected to increase. What attracts Vietnamese students to South Korea requires systematic and detailed research. However, at present, there are a few studies in Viet Nam on this issue. Therefore, this paper, using reliable quantitative tools, aims to determine factors influencing the decision of Vietnamese students to study in South Korea. Additionally, the study also seeks to identify the push and pull factors in choosing a study destination. The questionnaire was used as a research tool during the data collection process. The research sample was randomly selected from Vietnamese students who have been completing a degree in South Korea. Research findings are an important basis for international educational policy-makers in better decision-making and implementation of support and promotion policies for international students in general and those coming to South Korea in particular in the coming time.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Studying abroad decisions

The need for education, especially at higher education level, has always been the driving force behind graduate students' ability to boost economic growth and increase their social status. The desire to access quality programs at undergraduate and graduate levels becomes even stronger for those in developing and underdeveloped countries, where access to quality education is limited. These students tend to study in a more developed country with higher quality of training and improve their foreign language [10]. Forum on Education Abroad defines *study abroad* as "A subtype of Education Abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution" [11]. In this paper, "*Study abroad is the process by which learners attend training programs in a foreign country*".

### 2.2. Factors influencing decisions to study abroad

There have been various research conducted to define major factors influencing decisions to study higher education of international students in general [10]; [12]; [13] and of Vietnamese students in particular [14]. Almost all researches currently available attempt to explain global flows and factors influencing international students' decisions to study abroad through a commonly used theoretical framework called the push-pull model, which involves the interaction of a set of "push" and "pull" factors. This model is consistent with cross-border mobility, especially global mobility of international students. The "push" and "pull" factors constitute the function of this model in student decision-making process [10]. The "push" factors come from the students themselves, such as the desire for career prospects, personal growth, and language. These factors create students' interest and start thinking about studying abroad. In contrast, "pull" factors operate

within the host country. These factors are attributes of the host country that make it more attractive and influence the decision of international students to choose a study destination [10]. Inheriting previous studies, this study continues to use the pull and push model to study factors influencing Vietnamese students to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate studies in South Korea. The Pull model includes 9 factors: Training program; Support; Cultural Understanding; Recommendations; Cost; Social factors; Geographical proximity; Social ties; Immigration prospects. The push model includes 3 factors: Personal Growth; Language; Career Prospects. All 12 factors representing 2 groups of pull and push are measured by a system of component questions (Appendix 1) based on respondents' perceptions on a Likert scale (5-point).

#### 2.2.1. Interpretation of Pull factors

##### Training Program

A training program is defined as a system of educational and training activities designed and organized to achieve training objectives, with the goal of providing learners a higher education diploma or degree [15]. Academic reputation or the reputation of training programs, in particular, is of utmost importance for attracting international students to overseas training programs. According to American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2019, a strong academic reputation is the most significant aspect in assisting universities in gaining competitive advantages and enhancing their internationalization; and university reputation is a key factor for students' decision to attend the university. The reputation of a university for academics, research and training quality, and degree recognition is especially important for medical students when selecting an institution [16]. A program of education or training, according to the European Center for Vocational Training and Education Policy Terminology, is a list of activities, content and/or training methods taken to achieve an educational or training objective such as gaining knowledge, skills and/or competencies, and organized in a logical sequence over a specified period of time [17]. Students often evaluate such criteria as on-time graduation, diversity of majors, minors and courses, relevance between training modules and requirements of the major [18]; [13]. A training program with good reputation and diverse minors is thus one of the criteria that encourage students to study abroad.

*Hypothesis 1 (H1): Training program influences students' decision to study abroad.*

##### Support Services

International student support services in this study are understood as pre- and post-enrollment support services. According to [19] of the NASPA research and policy institute, five things that student affairs professionals should focus on to support international students are (1) Offering language and academic support programs; (2) Promoting positive social relationships between international students and peers; (3) Cultivating partnerships between international students and the community; (4) Creating inclusive career planning and development services; and (5) Establishing campus wide

partnerships to support holistic learning and development. Services to support students in academics, spiritual life, and other areas contribute to the overall training quality of the university [20] and these support services are often provided by the university's functional departments/units. Generally, student support services aim to create conditions that will increase training quality of the university, as well as its positive image among students. These support services are services in nature. Therefore, when learners realize more support services provided by host governments and universities, their decision to study abroad will increase correspondingly.

*Hypothesis 2 (H2): Support services influence students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Cultural Understanding**

UNESCO defines "Culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" [21]. Each culture has its own characteristics, forming its patterns of behaviors and values. Therefore, cultural understanding or cultural awareness is the foundation of communication, and it involves the ability to recognize cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions of cultural differences. Cultural understanding, as defined by IGI Global, is the ability to understand and communicate with people of different backgrounds. Studying abroad is considered a life-changing decision for numerous benefits, among which is students' gaining deeper insights in cultures, places and people from other regions. Cultural understanding allows students to see their own countries, ethnicities, or religious characteristics from different perspectives, because when immersing themselves in a new culture, they learn more about host country's culture and see unique features in their own one when they look back and make comparisons [18]; [13]. Simultaneously, studying abroad also offers students chances to expose to languages and living styles of the natives in countries of destination. As such, when students see the opportunities to experience new cultures, the decision to study abroad will also change accordingly.

*Hypothesis 3 (H3): The understanding on Korean culture influences students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Recommendations**

Recommendation is advice telling someone what the best thing to do is, as defined by Cambridge Dictionary. Accordingly, parents and friends are often considered advisors who have greater impacts on students' decisions to study overseas than other factors. Children are more likely to study abroad if their parents have attended universities and have better income. In a survey on international students who choose Sweden to study abroad, [22] found that friends, families and relatives have a substantial influence on students' decision to study abroad. Although survey respondents emphasized that the ultimate decision was their own, they were significantly influenced by ideas, recommendations, or advice from friends and acquaintances prior to making the final decision. One of the most effective

forms of recommendations is through word of mouth. Words-of-mouth referral is one of the most effective promotional tools that international education institutions could utilize to attract international students. Parents and relatives having graduated from a specific institution and enjoyed the experience are more likely to recommend it to their children, other family members or friends, according to research by [10]. Furthermore, the traditional concept of filial piety in Asian culture holds that children, regardless of their age, are expected to seek and listen to advice about studying abroad from their parents, or even the elders and other relatives such as uncles and aunts [12]. Parents also want their children to learn in a safe environment, avoiding unwanted influences [10]. It can be seen that students' choice of a potential destination country is influenced by the opinions or suggestions of friends and parents.

*Hypothesis 4 (H4): Recommendations (REC) influence students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Cost**

The Cambridge dictionary defines that cost of living is the amount of money a person needs to buy food, pay for housing and meet other basic needs. According to an article on the Barcelona Business School's C3S website, the cost of living is an essential element that puts international students under greater strain than any other factors. As a result, the study destination is partly determined by students' affordability across a number of areas, particularly for self-funded students, including tuition fees, housing rent, and food as well as expenses incurred outside the planned budget [23]. This is the most important factor for students, ahead of immigration opportunities, according to the latest survey by ICEF Agent Voice. Lower cost of living has placed host countries like Germany, South Korea, Spain, Italy, and France at the top of the table as the most attractive destinations for international students instead of favourite yet expensive traditional English-speaking markets like Australia, Canada, the UK and the U.S. [24]. Even within a country, the cost of living varies considerably between cities. The capital city often has a higher cost of living than the rest of the nation. Accordingly, the financial cost of living and studying is also an important factor to be considered when choosing where to study abroad.

*Hypothesis 5 (H5): Cost influences students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Social factors**

Social factors are defined by APA Dictionary of Psychology as those that influence thought or behavior in social contexts or affect self-perception vis-à-vis other individuals or groups. International students prefer to study in a free, peaceful country with a low crime rate and no kind of discrimination based on religion, gender, color, or other factors aside from financial considerations. This provides students with a sense of security both physically and emotionally with reference to the second level (safety needs) in the 5-level Maslow's Hierarchy. This is perfectly consistent with the characteristics that entice overseas students to choose a host country. In terms of globalization, a student aspires to connect and interact in daily life, as a

result, some international students base their decisions on the amount of social life, cultural diversity, and local views toward expats in their host country [25]

*Hypothesis 6 (H6): Social factors influence students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Proximity**

According to [26], there are two sorts of proximity: spatial proximity or geographical proximity and non-spatial proximity or organized proximity. Geographical proximity expresses kilometeric distance between two countries, as well as relativity in terms of morphological characteristics of the space, such as human activities, and transportation infrastructure. Organized proximity refers to the closeness among individuals of the two countries. Regardless of geographical distance, there is little difference in the nature of people's activities. Accordingly, spatial or organized proximity have an impact on human behaviors. Geographical and cultural similarity, for instance, has a significant impact on the audience's choice of film genres. This is indicated in a study on the impact of proximity and geo-cultural contact on audience's choice of movies [27]. Cultural distance is frequently referred to as geographical distance between cultures. Geographic distance increases cultural distance, with increasing dissimilarities in terms of rituals, religious beliefs, weather, and food. This causes feelings of alienation, making adaptation to foreign cultures even more challenging [28]. Aside from the safety and quality of education, for students, a reasonable geographical distance may mean some similarities between their home and host countries, making it easier for them to adapt [29]. Thus, geography, culture, religious beliefs, and even ideologies are all driving considerations for students when deciding overseas study destination.

*Hypothesis 7 (H7): Proximity influences students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Social ties**

Social links or social ties develop as a result of reaching out to someone for assistance or maintaining frequent contact [30]. Social tie is another source of exposure to the language and culture of the host country for study-abroad students. According to [31], social ties at a host institution can be categorized into the co-national network, multi-national network, and host national network. In the co-national network, the way students interact with their home influences the way they adjust to living and studying in the host country. Also, interaction within a multi-national network at the host country not only helps international students increase intercultural awareness but also reinforces their social identity. [32] found that participation in various social networks is important for study-abroad learners to immerse into the host institution's environment. In this sense, social tie is another factor that can affect students' decision to study abroad.

*Hypothesis 8 (H8): Social ties influence students' decision to study abroad.*

### **Immigration prospects**

Student visa issues, immigration procedures and opportunities to stay after graduation are believed to have an

impact on students' consideration of studying abroad. When selecting a study abroad destination, international students examine the visa application process [33]. Universities and research institutes in several nations attract prospect students by providing assistance to process visas should they be admitted to these institutions. It is the responsibility of school administrators to provide adequate support to their students [34]. Furthermore, governments are now adjusting policies to attract and retain qualified and skilled human resources after their study in the host institution. In this sense, necessary conditions such as a convenient visa policy for students, a simple visa transition process after graduation are factors that affect students' decision to study abroad.

*Hypothesis 9 (H9): Immigration prospects (IP) influences students' decision to study abroad.*

### **2.2.2. Interpretation of Push factors**

#### **Personal growth**

As defined by the Cambridge dictionary, personal growth is the process of personal skill improvement and experience enrichment. In the study by [35], personal growth means becoming more advanced or better. Studying abroad gives international students chances to become more independent and increase experience overseas, while learning how to manage themselves and handle cultural differences in a completely new environment [10]; [12]; [36]; [25]. In the context of escalating inflation and rising costs, studying abroad also helps students improve financial management skills, control personal spending and cut unnecessary expenses. Therefore, the greater the chance for personal growth that students see when studying abroad, the more likely they are to make the final decision.

*Hypothesis 10 (H10): Personal growth (PG) influences students' decision to study abroad.*

#### **Language**

Many people, including students and educators, feel that the best method to learn a language is to live in the nation where that language is spoken. Tanaka and Ellis' research demonstrates this by demonstrating that an increasing number of Japanese students travel to English-speaking nations to study English or specialized subjects in English [37]. Immersing in the native-speaking environment is thus especially useful for language learners. Tanaka and Ellis pointed out that in a classroom setting, it will help international students significantly enhance foreign language abilities, particularly in understanding grammar. In contrast, [38] proposed in a research that language acquired in everyday communication outside the classroom helps improve language more than in an instructor-led classroom. In any case, studying abroad provides students with a wealth of experience with a new language in a variety of settings both inside and outside the classroom, allowing students to improve ability to learn foreign language skills, particularly the primary language spoken in their chosen country; [10]; [12]; [25]. As a result, the decision to study abroad is also motivated by the desire to improve students' language skills.

*Hypothesis 11 (H11): Language influences students' decision to study abroad.*

## Career prospects

Students' impressions and understandings on study abroad locations when living in their home country, especially the location's reputation for great education, and recognition of degree from that university in his or her home country, influence their choices. A degree adds value to a decent salary and career perspectives [10]. Multinational corporations prefer to hire graduates who have studied abroad because they have been exposed to different cultures and can communicate effectively with clients from other countries thanks to their intercultural communication abilities [39].

*Hypothesis 12 (H12): Career perspectives influences students' decision to study abroad.*

From the literature review with 12 factors representing pull and push factors, this research model proposes factors affecting Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea as shown in Figure 1.

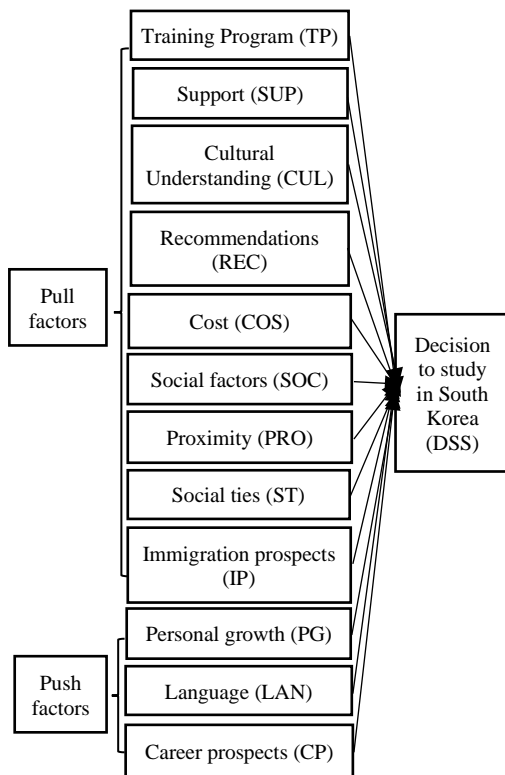


Figure 1. The research model

## 3. Research findings

### 3.1. Research data sample

The data used in this research is mainly primary data, collected from 5/2022 to 12/2022 via online survey questionnaire through Google Forms, with a total of 161 Vietnamese students who are currently studying or have studied in South Korea.

Regarding sample structure by gender, there are 70 males, accounting for 43.48%, and 91 females (56.52%), meaning the difference exists yet insignificant. Therefore, this structure is consistent with the reality of Vietnamese students going to South Korea.

Table 1. Research data sample

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	70	43.48
	Female	91	56.52
Age	Under 18	14	8.70
	19-30	135	83.85
	Over 30	12	7.45
Training level	Bachelor's Degree	15	9.32
	Master's Degree	79	49.07
	Doctorate	57	35.40
	Post-doctorate	10	6.21
Educational qualification	High school diploma	51	31.68
	Bachelor degree	59	36.65
	Post-graduate degree	51	31.68
Region	The North	63	39.13
	The Central	40	24.84
	The South	58	36.02
Area	Rural	81	50.3
	Urban	80	49.7
<b>Total</b>		<b>161</b>	<b>100</b>

Regarding sample structure by age, there are 14 people under 18 years old (accounted for 8.7%); 135 people aged 18-30 (accounted for 83.85%), and 12 people over 30 years old (accounted for 7.45%). Although there is a large variation in this sample structure, it is acceptable. At present, Vietnamese students in general and those studying in Korea in particular, are mainly undergraduates and postgraduates, which explains the reason why the age group over 18 accounts for the largest proportion. This is also in line with the sample structure by training level. Specifically, there are 15 university students (accounted for 9.32%); 79 Master's students (accounted for 49.07%); 57 doctoral students (accounted for 35.40%); 10 post-doctoral students (accounted for 7.45%). In addition, the sample structure by educational qualification before studying overseas shows that there are 51 high school graduates (with 31.68%), 59 Bachelor-degree holders (with 36.65%), and 51 post-graduate degree holders (with 31.68%). It can be thus concluded that the sample structure by age, training level and educational qualification is consistent with the reality of Vietnamese students studying in South Korea.

Regarding geographical region, there are 63 Northerners (39.13%); 40 people living in the Central (24.84%), and 58 Southerners (36.02%). Population distribution and income of people living in the North and the South are higher than those in the Central region. Therefore, the above sample structure according to locality is suitable.

Regarding sample structure by living area, 81 respondents are from the urban (accounted for 50.3%) while 80 are from the rural (accounted for 49.7%). Although according to Viet Nam's national population distribution, urban areas account for 30% and rural areas account for 70% [40], studying abroad in general and in South Korea in particular requires a certain level of education and finance. In reality, people living in urban areas of Viet Nam have a higher level of education and economic conditions than those living in villages, therefore the surveyed data for living areas is reasonable.

The total number of surveyed respondents by gender, age, educational qualification, training program, geographical region, and living area is 161. According to [41], research sample normally ranges from 100-200 on average. In addition, to study the factors affecting the decision to study abroad, this study uses a multivariable regression model. Accordingly, based on formula for research sample calculation of  $(50+8m)$  by [42], the minimum sample size is 154  $(50+8*13)$  because the research model proposed in this article includes 12 independent factors (variables) and 1 dependent factor (variable). Therefore, according to [41] and [42] the sample of 161 meets research requirements and ensure reliability to represent all Vietnamese who used to and are studying in South Korea to carry out further analysis methods.

### 3.2. Results of scale reliability test and exploratory factor analysis

As can be seen in Table 2, Cronbach's Alpha values are: 0.825, 0.829, 0.837, 0.873, 0.835, 0.784, 0.740, 0.751, 0.696, 0.678, 0.913, 0.887, 0.818 for respective factors: Decision to study in South Korea (DSS), Training Program (TP), Support Services (SUP), Cultural understanding (CUL), Recommendations (REC), Cost (COS), Social factors (SOC), Proximity (PRO), Social ties (ST), Immigration prospects (IP), Personal growth (PG), Language (LAN), Career prospects (CP). All of these values are above 0.6. According to [43], results of scale reliability test for 13 factors in the research model (Figure 1) consisting of 12 independent factors affecting the decision of Vietnamese students to study in South Korea (the dependent factor) are reliable for other analyses.

**Table 2. Results of scale reliability test and exploratory factor analysis**

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	Initial Eigenvalues	KMO	Bartlett's Test (Sig)	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings (%)
Decision to study in South Korea (DSS)	0.825	2.625	0.799	0.000	65.616
Training Program (TP)	0.829	2.760	0.858	0.000	74.194
Support Services (SUP)	0.837	3.436			
Cultural Understanding (CUL)	0.873	1.728			
Recommendations (REC)	0.835	2.331			
Cost of living (COS)	0.784	2.707			
Social factors (SOC)	0.740	1.975			
Proximity (PRO)	0.751	1.857			
Social ties (ST)	0.696	2.026			
Immigration prospects (IP)	0.678	1.903			
Personal growth (PG)	0.913	5.775			
Language (LAN)	0.887	4.774			
Career prospects (CP)	0.818	2.857			

Exploratory factor analysis shows that the dependent factor and 12 independent factors have Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values of 0.799 and 0.858 respectively (greater than 0.5). Both Sig values of Bartlett's Test are 0.000 (smaller than 5%). The smallest Initial Eigenvalues is 1.728 (greater than 1). Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings of 1 dependent factor and 12 independent factors are 65.616% and 74.194% respectively (greater than 50%). According to [44], results

of exploratory factor analysis (Table 2) and (Appendix 01) are reliable to conduct other analyses.

### 3.3. Results of Regression Model analysis

To test the 12 independent factors affecting Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea as specified in the proposed research model (Figure 1), the study uses Multivariable Regression Model analysis.

Sig value in Fisher's Test is 0.00 (smaller than 5%) which means research model (Figure 1) exists. In other words, there is at least one out of 12 factors: Training program; Support Services; Cultural Understanding; Recommendations; Cost; Social factors; Proximity; Social ties; Immigration prospects; Personal growth; Language; Career prospects, affecting the decision to study in South Korea of Vietnamese students.

**Table 3. Results of Regression Model analysis and Assumptions testing**

Contents		Test	Sig
<b>1. Regression Model Testing</b>		Fisher	.000
<b>2. Normally distributed Residuals</b>		One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov	.055
<b>3. Mean of Residuals</b>		One-Sample	1.00
<b>4. Autocorrelation of Residuals</b>		Runs	.693
<b>5. Multicollinearity</b>	<b>VIF</b>	<b>6. Spearman's RHO</b>	<b>Sig</b>
Training Program (TP)	1.000	Training Program (TP)	.555
Support Services (SUP)	1.000	Support Services (SUP)	.665
Cultural Understanding (CUL)	1.000	Cultural Understanding (CUL)	.769
Recommendations (REC)	1.000	Recommendations (REC)	.908
Cost (COS)	1.000	Cost (COS)	.961
Social factors (SOC)	1.000	Social factors (SOC)	.193
Proximity (PRO)	1.000	Proximity (PRO)	.976
Social ties (ST)	1.000	Social ties (ST)	.838
Immigration prospects (IP)	1.000	Immigration prospects (IP)	.686
Personal growth (PG)	1.000	Personal growth (PG)	.546
Language (LAN)	1.000	Language (LAN)	.766
Career prospects (CP)	1.000	Career prospects (CP)	.816

Ordinary least squares (OLS) is used to test the existence of regression model. Accordingly, 5 assumptions have to be tested to ensure reliability of OLS results.

+ Assumption 1 (A1): Residuals ( $\epsilon$ ) of regression model has normal distribution. Sig value of One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is 0.055 (greater than 5%), therefore, A1 is accepted.

+ Assumption 2 (A2): Mean of residuals ( $\epsilon$ ) of regression model is 0. Sig value of One-Sample test is 1 (greater than 5%), therefore, A2 is accepted.

+ Assumption 3 (A3): Residuals of regression model do not have any autocorrelation. Sig value of Runs test is 0.693 (greater than 5%), therefore, A3 is accepted.

+ Assumption 4 (A4): The regression model does not have any multicollinearity. Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) of 12 factors in the model are all equal to 1 (smaller than 2), therefore, the model does not have any multicollinearity, and thus A4 are accepted.

+ Assumption 5 (A5): The regression model does not have heteroskedasticity. For homoscedasticity, the study uses Spearman's RHO to test rank correlation between residuals of

the model and 12 independent variables. Sig values of Spearman's RHO test of 12 independent factors and residuals of the model are all greater than 5%, therefore, there is no rank correlation between the model's residuals and 12 independent variables. In other words, the model does not have heteroskedasticity. Accordingly, A5 is accepted.

With all five assumptions accepted, results of estimation and testing of regression model using the OLS are reliable.

### 3.4. Discussion

Coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.485, meaning the factors in the research model (Figure 1) affecting Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea is 48.5%, and the factor not included in the model is 51.15%.

Out of 12 research hypotheses corresponding to 12 independent factors, 7 are accepted, including H1; H2; H9; H10; H11; H12 with 5% significant because Sig values of these hypotheses are all smaller than 5%, except for H3, which is cultural understanding, accepted with the significance of 10% because its Sig value is 0.079. The other 5 hypotheses are rejected because of high Sig values (greater than 5%) including H4; H5; H6; H7; H8.

Training program (H1) has the biggest effect on students' decision to study abroad in South Korea because of the highest standardized Beta coefficient (at 0.388) among 7 factors. This result suggests that international reputation for training quality and research opportunities, and the widely recognized qualifications in and outside South Korea are the most critical considerations in students' decision to study in Korea. According to a report in the 2022 World Competitiveness Ranking of the International Institute for Management Development, South Korea was ranked 27th worldwide and 6th in Asia-Pacific in terms of competitiveness [45]. Furthermore, South Korea is home to globally renowned universities with courses in both Korean and English. Seoul National University, for instance, was ranked 20th in Asia and 129th in the world, by US News and World Report's best universities 2016 ranking [46]. As part of the efforts to internationalize higher education and attract more international students to South Korea, the Korean government has proposed universities to offer bilingual programs, mostly in English and Korean. Brain Korea 21 Project (BK 21 Project) and World Class University Project (WCU Project) are two of the most highlighted higher education internationalization policies that have elevated education of South Korea to a new height [47]. This means that Vietnamese students expect to access high-quality and internationally-recognized education in South Korea. Additionally, diverse extracurricular activities such as Korea Global Business Competitions, student clubs, community projects, internship and exchange opportunities in the third countries are among important factors pushing Vietnamese students to choose South Korea as a study destination.

The factor with the second biggest effect is Personal Growth (H10) with standardized Beta coefficient of 0.363. This result indicates that most students expected to become more independent and be able to cope well with unfamiliar situations while living and studying in South Korea, which

means that the study-abroad experience has taught them how to make their own decisions. As such, rather than relying on parents or seniors, students have to make their own decisions and take responsibility for the results afterward [48]; [14]. This factor is of utmost importance for Vietnamese students when deciding to choose South Korea, which eventually helps them grow and become better. Additionally, the data demonstrates that Vietnamese students wish to broaden their worldview and gain overseas experience which greatly contributes to their personal growth. This result is in line with research findings by [48] in which he found that 90% of surveyed respondents agreed and very much agreed with the idea that studying abroad made them more open-minded.

Language (H11), with standardized Beta coefficient of 0.275, is ranked third out of 7 accepted factors. The reason for this result is partly because of increasing number of Korean enterprises and visitors to Viet Nam over the past decades. As of 2021, with over 9.000 projects, South Korea has become the largest FDI investor in Viet Nam [49]. Similarly, the number of Korean visitors over the first 10 months of 2022 tops the list of foreign visitors to Viet Nam with 424.000 arrivals, nearly 22 times higher than that of 2021 [40]. Therefore, the demand for manpower with high proficiency in Korean language is increasing, which increases Vietnamese students' intention to improve Korean language proficiency. In this sense, studying in South Korea, besides daily exposure to general Korean language, is a precious opportunity to improve Korean business language, which hugely benefits graduates upon returning to Viet Nam to meet job requirements. This result aligns with findings in the research of [14], in which they stated that nearly 85% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed that they want to "improve English in the homeland of this language".

The next factor in line is Career prospects (H12) with Beta coefficient of 0.209. The number of Korean companies in Viet Nam is increasing, leading to a high demand for professionals who could use Korean language to work effectively. Furthermore, to meet the market demands, such companies are looking for graduates who have experiences with Korean work culture, Korean national culture, workplace flexibility, and a large social network. Many companies especially require staff to have a diploma from abroad [14]. The above reasons have had a significant impact on the decision of Vietnamese students to study in South Korea.

With a standardized Beta of 0.196, support services (H2) for foreign students rank fifth out of 7 accepted factors. Students typically expect all sorts of support ranging from academic affairs, languages, psychology, and other matters when immersing in a new learning environment in a foreign country. Although students have to satisfy foreign language requirements for university admission, academic language and daily life communicative language are not the same. This is why academic language programs for international students must be provided. In particular, speaking and writing skills in the target language are a major barrier for international students to shift from a passive-receptive learning style to a more active classroom discussion and interaction [50]. More importantly, most international

students from time to time experience feelings of cultural shock, homesickness, loneliness and social isolation, which jeopardize their learning and survival at the host university. Therefore, international students need to be provided with additional services to ease the feelings of frustration, boost confidence and assistance in adjusting to the new environment [19]. In reality, universities with great enrollment of international students often offer a variety of additional learning support programs, both on and off campus, specifically designed to facilitate international students' adaptation to life and study at the host university environment [51]. South Korea is a country that has spent generously in excellent student support programs [52]. This further reinforces that Vietnamese students' choice to study in South Korea is reasonable.

Immigration prospects (H9), with standardized Beta coefficient of 0.112, rank sixth out of 7 accepted factors. Students considered prospects of immigration before making any decisions to study overseas. According to [53] study on factors that inspire mainland Chinese students to choose Australia as their study abroad location, up to 97% of students feel that the possibilities of staying in Australia after graduation are high. Students are drawn to Australia's migration policy for skilled workers and wish to settle permanently after completing their studies. In fact, it is the responsibility of school administrators to provide adequate support related to visa processing to their prospect students [34]. Governments are now adjusting policies to attract and retain qualified and skilled human resources. South Korea is among the countries with extremely detailed scoring methods for each type of visa and each group of objects, as well as visa conversion procedures for those in need. According to the Ministry of Employment and Labor of Korea, the Korean government has decided to ease visa regulations for graduates to assist small and medium-sized companies in Korea in recruiting foreign human resources who want to get jobs after their studies in South Korea [54]. According to the Korean Ministry of Justice, graduates from a Korean university will be granted an E-7 visa, even if they work in a field unrelated to their majors, allowing them to find better-paying jobs compared to an E-9 visa [55]. In another study, Vietnamese students decided to study in the UK because they wanted to experience Western culture and travel to Europe while studying in England [14]. As informed by Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Viet Nam, Vietnamese citizens who hold a South Korean visa are exempted to apply printed Taiwan visa but an e-visa to visit Taiwan within 30 days [56]. These elements allow students to take advantage of a Korean visa to travel to other countries in a simpler way, motivating students to choose Korea as a study destination.

Last but not least, Cultural Understanding is one of the factors affecting Vietnamese students' choices when deciding on study destination (H3), with standardized Beta coefficient of 0.104. Clearly, studying in another country does benefit oneself not only academically, but also socially. This means that when studying in South Korea, they have chances to immerse in Korean language and culture, and to communicate with the natives in Korean. [57] used to emphasize that Vietnamese students "have opportunities to learn and

exchange more and more regarding cultures of other countries within the time I study English in the Philippines" regarding wishes of students to expose to native language when they learn foreign languages. Furthermore, geographic proximity has a positive influence on Vietnamese students' decision to study English in the Philippines [12]; [57]. Therefore, having Oriental peculiarities which are easy for Vietnamese students to fit into, South Korea is the ideal study destination for Vietnamese students.

**Table 4.** Results of research hypothesis testing

No.	Research Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Sig	Concluded	Rating
1	H1: Training Program (TP) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.388	.000	Accept	1
2	H2: Support Services (SUP) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.196	.001	Accept	5
3	H3: Cultural Understanding (CUL) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.104	.079	Accept	7
4	H4: Recommendations (REC) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	-.041	.490	Reject	-
5	H5: Cost - (COS) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.088	.138	Reject	-
6	H6: Social factors (SOC) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	-.038	.516	Reject	-
7	H7: Proximity (PRO) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	-.050	.394	Reject	-
8	H8: Social ties (ST) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.095	.110	Reject	-
9	H9: Immigration prospects (IP) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.112	.061	Accept	6
10	H10: Personal growth (PG) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.363	.000	Accept	2
11	H11: Language (LAN) influences Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.275	.000	Accept	3
12	H12: Career prospects (CP) influence Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea	.209	.001	Accept	4
R Square			.485		

#### 4. Conclusion

The research findings show that there are 7 factors listed by levels of significance influencing Vietnamese students' decisions to study in South Korea, including Training program; Personal growth; Language; Career prospects; Support; Immigrant prospects; and Cultural understanding. This research is one of the few using quantitative tools to do research on the topic of Vietnamese students' decisions to study in South Korea, therefore, it is valuable for training institutions in South Korea to propose policies to attract more Vietnamese in the future. In addition to the empirical contribution, the study has also systemized and cited reliable sources to identify factors and construct on-point questionnaires which are beneficial for other researchers interested in this field.

Despite strong points, the study is able to describe only 48.5% of the factors influencing Vietnamese student's



decision to pursue further education in South Korea. Additionally, the study sample was limited to 161 respondents, which is still small compared to the national scale of the study. This leaves room for further research to develop and expand the number of factors influencing Vietnamese students' decision to study in South Korea as well as expand the research sample. As such, the study results will be improved with higher reliability.

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### APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Abbreviation	FACTORS	Loading Value	References
<b>DSS</b>	<b>Decision to study in South Korea</b>		
DSS1	I want to pursue educational values in South Korea	.819	[58]
DSS2	I think education system in South Korea is better	.773	[22]
DSS3	I am confident with the decision to study in South Korea	.829	[13]
DSS4	I expect rewarding experience from studying in South Korea	.818	[13]
<b>TP</b>	<b>Training Program (TP)</b>		
TP1	There are a wide range of courses in South Korea	.706	[36]
TP2	South Korea is internationally reputed for high education quality and research opportunities	.707	[10]
TP3	Qualification is widely recognized in and outside South Korea	.636	[12]
TP4	Courses are offered in both English and Korean	.563	[59]

<b>SUP</b>	<b>Support Services</b>		
SUP1	There are numerous language support services	.691	[12]
SUP2	There are numerous academic support services	.744	[12]
SUP3	There are various social support services	.768	[12]
SUP4	There are diverse emotional support services	.817	[12]
<b>CUL</b>	<b>Cultural Understanding</b>		
CUL1	It would be good to have exposure to Korean culture	.782	[36], [13]
CUL2	It would be good to have exposure to Korean language	.822	[13], [36]
CUL3	There are more opportunities to communicate with people from other cultures	.584	[13], [36]
CUL4	It is easy to fit into South Korean culture with similar Oriental peculiarities	.639	[36]
CUL5	It would be good to have exposure to Korean lifestyle	.724	[12]
CUL6	There are chances to immerse into Korean-speaking environment	.757	[12]
<b>REC</b>	<b>Recommendations (REC)</b>		
REC1	My friend who used to study in South Korea recommended me to study in South Korea	.893	[36]
REC2	My friend recommended me to study in South Korea	.900	[36]
<b>COS</b>	<b>Cost (COS)</b>		
COS1	The tuition fees in South Korea is reasonable	.856	[12]
COS2	The living expenses in South Korea is affordable	.874	[12]
COS3	The travel cost within country and to other countries in Asian region is affordable	.580	[13]
COS4	I can find part-time jobs while studying to support living expenses	.529	[12]
<b>SOC</b>	<b>Social factor</b>		
SOC1	South Koreans are hospitable to foreigners	.594	[25]
SOC2	South Korea is a country with little discrimination (based on race, religion, gender)	.635	[25]
<b>PRO</b>	<b>Proximity</b>		
PRO1	South Korea is close to Viet Nam geographically, making it easy to travel back and forth	.501	[10]
PRO2	There are various beautiful attractions in South Korea	.533	[13]
<b>ST</b>	<b>Social ties</b>		
ST1	I have friends currently living/studying in South Korea	.652	[12]
ST2	I have family members/relatives currently living/studying in South Korea	.898	[12]
ST3	I have friends who used to living/studying in South Korea	.664	[12]
ST4	I have family members/relatives who used to living/studying in South Korea	.755	[13], [12]
<b>IP</b>	<b>Immigration prospects</b>		
IP1	South Korea has student-visa friendly policy	.753	[25]
IP2	The procedure to switch to Visa D-10 and E-7 after graduation is simple	.716	[60]
IP3	South Korean visa allows visa-free access to many countries	.736	[25]
<b>PG</b>	<b>Personal growth</b>		
PG1	I expect to become more independent when studying in South Korea	.780	[36], [13]
PG2	I can develop the ability to cope with unfamiliar situations	.707	[13]
PG3	My worldview can be broadened	.791	[36]
PG4	I can gain overseas experience	.744	[36]
PG5	I can get insights into labor market in South Korea in advance	.731	[36]
PG6	I can understand working style of South Korean people	.736	[36]
<b>LAN</b>	<b>Language</b>		
LAN1	I can improve Korean language in general	.507	[36]
LAN2	There are more opportunities for me to practice business Korean	.508	[36]
LAN3	I can experience a new language	.534	[61]
<b>CP</b>	<b>Career prospects (CP)</b>		
CP1	Companies prefer to recruit overseas graduates	.726	[36]
CP2	Studying in South Korea gives me valuable experience when working with people from different nations	.720	[36]
CP3	Studying in South Korea gives me chances to expand professional network	.795	[61]
CP4	It is easier to look for jobs with high salary	.726	[36]