International Faculty Members' Intention to Leave South Korea: Do acculturation and cultural advantage matter?

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Abstract. The percentage of international faculty members at Korean universities peaked in 2013 and has been decreasing since, suggesting that Korean universities have a problem with international faculty member retention. This study investigates whether international faculty members' intention to leave is associated with their degree of acculturation. Results are based on analyses of data from 325 international faculty members with doctorates working at Korean universities nationwide. Regression analyses reveal that acculturation, work-related conditions (salary, workload, workplace climate) and mobility-related motivational factors (job market in home country, interest in Korea) explain international faculty members' intention to leave. A 'cultural advantage' (ethnically Korean or living with a Korean spouse) is not a significant predictor of intention to leave. Suggestions to support international faculty members, and to help bring about synergistic organizational change are ventured in the hopes of bolstering retention at Korean universities going forward.

Keywords: academic mobility, acculturation, cultural adjustment, international faculty members, retention, South Korean universities

Introduction

Contemporary international academic career mobility is becoming markedly more common on the heels of intensifying global competition among higher education institutions to attract highly skilled talent (Altbach &Yudkevich, 2017). This trend extends to East Asian higher education systems as well as to

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European and Anglo-American systems (Huang & Welch, 2021).

International faculty members may be motivated to relocate to another country by professional ambition, for example to develop their career competitiveness, or by other personal motivations, such as to undertake a cultural adventure (Froese, 2012; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). However, these professionals may not stay long if they fail to adjust to the social and academic culture of the host country because mobile academics experience transformative changes in both social and academic life when they move across culturally different societies. One of the most representative theories regarding cultural adjustment is acculturation theory (e.g., Berry, 1992, 1997), which emphasizes that unsuccessful integration into the host country might result in dissatisfaction with both work and social life, which in turn may lead to departure. These processes are also intimately connected to the adjustment processes undergone by mobile academics. Many studies, mostly researched in North America and Europe, have investigated how mobile academics adjust to a host country's culture and academic system (e.g., Chen & Lawless, 2018; Jiang et al., 2010). However, there is comparatively less research on the flow of mobile academics to non-English speaking countries, though this trend is growing (see Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018).

The South Korean (hereafter, Korean) government and Korean universities have also made concerted efforts to attract and retain international faculty members in response to heightened global competition (Shin & Gress, 2018). However, recent data show that the number of international faculty members in Korea consistently declined after reaching its 2013 peak of 7.1% of the total faculty population to 5.4% in 2022 (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2022), which implies that there are issues and challenges concerning international faculty member retention at Korean universities. This should be cause for concern, because institutionally, failure to retain international faculty members results in financial and human resource losses (Lawrence et al., 2014).

The present study is designed to investigate factors associated with international faculty members' intention to leave Korea, and by extension Korean universities, with a specific focus on the role of acculturation. The role of acculturation may exert a significant influence on international faculty members' decision to leave more homogenous and collectivistic societies like South Korea's (Kim & Kim, 2010). For example, it has been argued that Korean society lacks an understanding of cultural diversity and expects foreigners to assimilate without providing sufficient support (Seol & Skrentny, 2009). Korean cultural norms, such as strict hierarchies and limited communication, are key factors that may hinder the successful integration of foreign professionals in Korea, which may in turn result in dissatisfaction in the workplace leading to departure (Kraeh et al., 2015). Indeed, studies of international faculty members at Korean universities also suggest that homogenous, exclusive, and hierarchical academic cultures contribute to dissatisfaction and departure (e.g., Gress & Shin, 2020a; T. Kim, 2005; S. K. Kim, 2016). Despite the potential importance of acculturation vis-à-vis the adjustment of international faculty members, previous studies on faculty turnover have largely focused on the role of

work condition factors (e.g., salary and job satisfaction, workplace climate) (Ward et al., 2022), thus providing impetus for the present study.

Moreover, the current study aims to investigate the role of a 'cultural advantage' (e.g., international faculty members with Korean ethnic backgrounds and those with Korean spouses) and its relation to their intention to leave. There has been a building trend that comparatively examines specificities associated with international faculty members in Korea with and without Korean ancestry, since many returnees from abroad work as international faculty members in Korean universities (see Froese, 2010; Gress, 2022). Indeed, many universities strategically hire international faculty members with Korean ancestry assuming that their familiarity with the local cultural will contribute to an improved institutional fit and longer-term retention. For example, Froese (2010), Gress and Shin (2020a), and Gress (2022) found differences between these cohorts in terms of administrative and governance participation, and workplace-related perceptions (e.g., communication and trust). Moreover, previous studies have pointed out that the spousal factor plays a key role in expatriates' adjustment and withdrawal decisions (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Davies et al., 2015). Marriage to a spouse with a host nationality is an important motivational factor for many international faculty members to relocate to East Asian countries such as Korea and Japan (Huang, 2018). However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no in-depth study that has investigated the role of ethnicity, spousal background, and acculturation vis-à-vis faculty member intention to leave a host country, particularly when other personal, workplace-oriented, and mobility-related motivational factors are considered.

The present study is designed to fill this perceived gap in the literature, specifically in a non-English speaking higher education context, via a country-wide examination of international faculty members working at Korean universities. Two research questions (RQs) guide the study:

RQ1 Is international faculty members' acculturation associated with their intention to leave Korea?

RQ2 Does intention to leave differ between ethnically-Korean international faculty members and international faculty members with Korean spouses (culturally advantaged groups), and international faculty members without these designators?

Research Background

Acculturation and intention to leave

This study highlights the impact of acculturation as well as institutional and mobility-related factors on international faculty members' intention to leave their host country of employment. The concept of acculturation has been widely used in the field of cross-cultural adjustment studies (Li et al., 2021). Acculturation refers to processes of cultural, psychological, and social adaptation to a new culture (Berry,

1992, 1997), inclusive of processes associated with obtaining skills to successfully inhabit a new cultural setting (Sam & Berry, 2010). Factors such as individuals' attitude towards acculturation, age, length of residence in the host country, educational level, gender, and social support have been pointed out as key factors attributed to successful acculturation (Lee & Vorst, 2010; Li, 2011). The support factor is indicative of the fact that acculturation is viewed as a two-way street; there is an onus on both individuals and institutions to remain receptive to change (Sam & Berry, 2010). Related to this, acculturation processes may invariably differ depending on the nature of migration. For example, compared to migrants, expatriates may have no intention of permanent migration, and therefore may put less effort into adjusting to the host society while maintaining their original identity to ensure successful repatriation (Thirlwall et al., 2021). Along a similar vein, Kim et al. (2022), in a Korean-university study, found that international faculty members were less inclined to invest themselves fully into Korean language use and Korean university organizational norms, while entertaining the possibility of a move out of Korea in the future.

Recent contributions from the higher education literature on faculty mobility use the terms "sticky" and "stretchy" to explain the role of acculturation and faculty members' motivation to stay or leave (see Burford et al., 2021; Chou, 2021; Sautier, 2021; Tzanakou & Henderson, 2021). "Stickiness" infers that academics who are well integrated into the host country (or university) culture prefer to stay longer. Conversely, academics who are motivated to leave their host country are "stretched" to posts elsewhere. Both concepts might be applied in the opposite direction. For example, Pustelnikovaite (2021) found that international faculty members preferred to stay at UK universities even though their working environments deteriorated after Brexit. On the other hand, Sautier (2021) discovered that some junior academics preferred to stay in their home country even though policy encouraged them to gain overseas work experience for a certain period of time to further their careers. These studies imply that once academics are familiar with the culture and higher education systems in a host or home university, they may be reluctant to leave for other higher education systems.

The role of acculturation is potentially more significant in East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, and China, where cultures vary immensely from English-speaking countries. While studies of international faculty members' acculturation experiences in the context of US higher education are abundant (e.g., Chen & Lawless, 2018; Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016), there is a distinct dearth of studies, in particular quantitative-based studies, focusing on international faculty members' acculturation experience and its impact on turnover intention in the East Asian context. Having said this, a recent study by Chen (2022), investigated how international faculty members at Japanese universities perceive their integration and their integration practice. The study found that those who had a better understanding of Japanese culture were able to integrate more effectively. Similarly, Gress (2022) found that extra-institutional cross-cultural adjustment as well as intra-institutional factors such as workplace inclusivity contributed to higher levels of workplace satisfaction at Korean universities. Although the above cited works provide important insights into the general nature of international faculty members' acculturation

experiences in non-English speaking countries, the foci did not extensively cover the linkage between acculturation and intention to leave, hence requiring the need for broader investigation.

Factors contributing to international faculty members' turnover intention

While some studies investigated international faculty members' turnover intention in the U.S. context (e.g., Kim et al., 2013; Lawrence et al., 2014; Rosser, 2004), there is a comparative dearth of studies on international faculty member retention in non-English speaking countries (Schoepp, 2011). Previous studies pointed out that international faculty members are often at a higher *risk* of leaving their institutions. This is because international faculty members are often placed in more disadvantageous positions due to language barriers, lack of mentorship, constricted access to networks, lower salaries, and limited resources (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Luczaj, 2020), and these disadvantages might lead to high turnover. Given this context, the retention of international faculty members is a critical issue facing institutional leaders in globalizing academe.

International faculty member retention depends on various individual and institutional-level factors as well as the potential cross-cultural considerations previously discussed. For example, in the present research, international faculty members' ethnic status might have explanatory power because ethnic Koreans' roles and perceptions at Korean universities might differ greatly from those without this shared ethnicity (see Froese, 2010; Gress & Shin 2020a; Kim, 2005). Additionally, international faculty members with Korean spouses might have fewer problems acculturating to Korean society. Indeed, many international faculty members in Korean universities decided to work in Korea largely due to the influence of their Korean spouses (Froese, 2012). A similar pattern is found in the case of Japan. Huang (2018) pointed out that marriage to a Japanese national was an important motivation for many international academics' decision to work at Japanese universities, especially those from western countries. Overall, previous studies argued that international faculty members married to host country nationals are expected to benefit from a heightened cross-cultural competence (Davies et al., 2015; Froese, 2012). Partner nationality, in short, plays a crucial role in expatriates' mobility decisions, adjustment, and withdrawal (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Still, there is a relative dearth of studies that specifically explored the role of ethnicity in expatriates' departure intention and acculturation. However, some researchers have investigated the challenges associated with re-entry acculturation for "returnee academics", especially in the context of China and Korea, where returnee academics are considered important resources for the internationalization of higher education. Briefly summarized, these studies indicate that returning international academics encounter various difficulties in their identity formation and role transition (Li et al., 2020; Namgung, 2009).

In addition, individual characteristics such as gender and age (Martinez et al., 2017), length of stay in the host country and workplace (Lawrence et al., 2014), and professional characteristics such as affiliated discipline (Ryan et al., 2012; Xu, 2008) and tenure status (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004) are

potentially related to intention to leave. Moreover, institutional characteristics such as university mission type (e.g., research-focused vs non-research-focused) may also play important roles in determining departure intention (Glandon & Glandon, 2001). The recruitment policy concerning international faculty members, the reward system, as well as the nature of experienced academic life may differ significantly based on the type of institution and its mission.

Intra-organizationally, favorable work conditions such as an attractive salary and workload are considered important "pull factors" for international faculty members to expatriate (Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018); such factors may also be closely associated with retention. The immediate workplace climate, or host receptivity, is also important (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Less open and less receptive workplace climates resulted in marginalized roles in governance and decision-making participation for international faculty members in some studies (Brotherhood et al., 2020; Collins, 2008; Skachkova, 2007), and such exclusion may also inevitably lead to higher intention to leave. Conversely, Jonasson et al. (2018) found evidence that inclusive management benefited international faculty members in Nordic universities.

Lastly, international faculty members' mobility-related motivational factors might also be closely associated with their intention to leave. Mobility motivation can be categorized into three types based on findings from previous studies (e.g., Froese, 2012; Lee & Kuzhabekova, 2018; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). The first motivation includes "poor job market conditions at home", where a scarcity of high-quality academic job positions available in the home country "pushes" academics to seek overseas employment opportunities. A second motivation is related to the strategic "career development" choice of individuals, since obtaining international work experience and a research network is regarded as a vital asset for one's career in the contemporary academic job market. The third motivation category is "cultural exploration", where individuals decide to relocate to a foreign country due to a particular interest in the host country's culture and to expose themselves to a different cultural setting.

International faculty members in Korean higher education

The term "international faculty member" and the nature of mobility differ across regional contexts (Teichler, 2017). For example, many countries use visa or citizenship categories (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010) or a place of birth when defining international faculty status (Kim et al., 2013). The term "foreign-born" faculty is often used in the U.S. context, a term that includes faculty members who were born in a different country, but later became U.S. citizens (Webber, 2013). As for Korea, full-time international faculty members are defined and counted in national statistics as those holding different nationality statuses other than Korean, including ethnic Koreans who were born abroad, as well as those who were born and educated in Korea, but became a citizen of another country later on in life (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2021). The present study is based on this definition of international faculty member.

The number of international faculty members in Korea started to increase due to policy and legal interventions that took place beginning in the late 1990s. First, the revision of the "Education Civil Servant Law" in 1999 allowed national universities to hire full-time international faculty members on the tenure track. Until that change, national universities were not legally able to do so. The push for change was catalyzed by the fallout from the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and the resulting need for Korea to more fervently pursue globalization (Shin, 2021). Second, the introduction of the "Study Korea Project" in 2005, a long-term policy agenda for attracting international students, stimulated many universities to hire international faculty members to establish a globalized learning environment (Byun et al., 2011). Third, the Korean government introduced the "World Class University (WCU)" (2008-2012) project, which supported Korean universities if they invited globally recognized scholars to bolster their research competency. On the heels of these policy measures, the number of international faculty members increased significantly, from 1,373 (2.4% of the total faculty population) in 2000 to 4,813 (5.4%) in 2022. As previously mentioned, however, there has been a precipitous decline since numbers peaked in 2013 (6,130 international faculty members and 7.1% of the total faculty member population). The rapid increase in the number of international faculty members up until 2013 can be understood as the result of the aforementioned aggressive policy efforts by the Korean government to accelerate the pace of internationalization of the country's higher education system. These efforts led to massive hiring drives that took place primarily from 2004 to 2012.

The subsequent decline in numbers may be derived from multiple factors such as contract termination or the decision by some international faculty members to seek employment elsewhere, possibly due to poor acculturation. One reason may be because top-down initiatives formulated at the national-level often cannot guarantee organizational-level change that accommodates both local and invited faculty (Smart & St. John, 1996), let alone accomplish necessary change in a timely fashion. This may be particularly the case in Korea, where large numbers of international academics were hired through government initiatives over a short period of time, but in the absence of effective open organizational cultures that could successfully meet the needs of international faculty members or support their adjustment to the local academic system (see Shin, 2021).

There are some defining characteristics of international faculty members in Korea. First, there is a high proportion of international faculty members from English-speaking countries. As of 2020, professors from the US, at 40.4%, accounted for the lion's share of international faculty members working at 4-year Korean universities. When including the UK, Canada, and Australia, the group from English-speaking countries swells to 62.7% of the total international faculty member population (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2022). Such a high proportion of international faculty members from English-speaking countries is the result of a preference for native English speakers who can effectively deliver content courses in English (Rhee et al., 2019).

Second, there is relatively low proportion of international faculty members with Doctoral degrees. According to Ko et al. (2016), 78.2% of the international faculty members at four-year Korean

universities held Master's degrees as their highest academic qualification. Such a high proportion of Master's degree holders can be explained by the fact that the majority of language instructors at universities hold faculty status in Korea, and they are largely from English-speaking countries.

The third characteristic is related to the differences in international faculty members who are ethnically Korean (e.g., Korean Americans) compared to international faculty members without Korean ethnicity. Recent data show that the proportion of ethnically Korean international faculty members accounted for approximately 17.6% of the total international faculty member population in 2020 (Korean Educational Statistics Service, 2021) , and this proportion is notably higher at national universities and research-focused universities.

Research Design

Data

This study utilizes survey data collected from the "National Survey on International Faculty Members," which was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea. The survey inquired about international faculty members' motivation to pursue their academic career in Korea, their current work environment, cultural adjustment, teaching and research activities, future career plans, and questions pertaining to their personal and academic backgrounds.

The sample database was created in two stages. First, the research team created a list of international faculty members from the Korea Research Information (KRI) database system. From approximately 70,000 full-time faculty (both domestic and international) listed in the database system, which was close to 80% of the total number of full-time faculty in Korean colleges and universities in 2019 (about 87,000), a total 3,882 full-time international faculty members were identified by name and nationality, which accounted for 75.7% of all international faculty members in Korea. Second, this initial database was narrowed to only international faculty members in four-year universities with Doctoral degrees. International faculty members' (mobility) motivations, professional roles, and perceptions of their work environments might significantly differ by employment status and highest degree. For example, international faculty members without Doctoral degrees tend to work in language institutes or as language instructors, and to be employed on annual-based contracts (Ko et al., 2016), while those with Doctoral degrees tend to be employed in academic departments with tenure or non-tenure status. By limiting the target sample to Doctoral degree holders only, we tried to minimize heterogeneity issues within the international faculty member data. The survey was administered online from April to May of 2019. Institutional Review Board approval was received prior to its dissemination. The online survey link was sent to 1,098 Ph.D. holding international faculty members, and a total of 325 participated in the survey (a 29.6% response rate).

The characteristics of the international faculty members in the sample are as follows: First, 83.7% of the respondents were male and 12.9% were ethnic Korean. Respondents with Korean spouses accounted for 37.2%. In terms of discipline, 57.2% were affiliated with the humanities, arts, or social sciences. 54.2% of respondents were affiliated with research-focused universities and 20.7% were already tenured. Overall, despite slight variations in sample compositions compared to population data (about 5-7% more respondents were male and non-STEM faculty, about 13% more respondents were from North America and Europe, and 10% fewer were from East Asia), the overall sample can be considered representative in terms of personal background. Nevertheless, because the information available in the KRI database did not include international faculty members' ethnicity, spousal nationality, and tenure status, we were unable to determine the level of sample representation concerning those aspects. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the sample, and Table 2 presents a more detailed sample composition for the three cohorts.

Table 1. Sample composition

Variable		*N*	%
Gender	Male	272	83.7
	Female	53	16.3
Ethnicity	Ethnic Korean	42	12.9
	Others	283	87.1
Spousal ethnicity	Korean spouse	121	37.2
	Others	204	62.8
Discipline	Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	186	57.2
	Science and Engineering (STEM)	139	42.8
Type of university	Research focused	176	54.2
	Non-research focused	132	40.6
Tenure status	Already tenured	66	20.7
	Not tenured yet or Non-tenure track	259	79.3

Table 2. Detailed sample composition by cohort

		Ethnic Korean (n=42)	With Korean spouse (n=121)	Without cultural advantage (n=191)
Gender	Male	28 (66.7)	101 (83.5)	163 (85.3)
	Female	14 (33.3)	20 (16.5)	28 (14.7)
Tenure status	Tenured	11 (26.2)	24 (19.9)	37 (19.4)
	Not tenured yet or non-tenure track	31 (73.8)	97 (80.1)	154 (80.6)
Discipline	Arts and Humanities and Social science	29 (69.0)	87 (71.9)	90 (47.1)
	STEM	13 (31.0)	34 (28.1)	101 (52.9)
Type of university	Research focused	29 (69.0)	68 (60.7)	84 (45.9)
	Non-research focused	13 (31.0)	44 (39.3)	88 (54.1)

Variables and analytical method

The dependent variable is the respondents' *intention to leave Korea*, measured by a Likert-scale question ("I often think about leaving Korea"). Faculty members' *intention* to leave is widely used in many studies as a proxy indicator because intention is closely associated with actual turnover behavior (e.g., Lawrence et al., 2014; Zhou & Volkwein, 2004).

The key independent variables are the respondents' degree of acculturation, their ethnic background, and spousal ethnicity. The first independent variable, *acculturation*, measures international faculty members' perceived level of psychological and cultural adaptation to the Korean society. There has been significant debate about how to measure acculturation (Algeria, 2009), and various studies have used different approaches to investigate acculturation, from simple proxies to an expanded toolkit (see Doucerain et al., 2017). The acculturation measurement in the current study focuses on individuals' unidimensional adaptation to the host culture (Rissel, 1997). The acculturation variable is composed using a mean of responses to two survey questions measured on 5-point Likert scales to assess respondents' cognitive perception of their psychological and cultural adaptation to Korean society: 1) I often feel that I am increasingly becoming 'more Korean'; 2) I mix Korean and my home country's culture in my life. The other two independent variables, whether international faculty members are ethnically Korean or married to a Korean spouse, are measured by dummy variables.

The first set of control variables includes international faculty members' socio-demographic and work-related factors such as gender, age, length of stay in Korea, affiliated discipline (STEM/non-STEM), type of institution (research focused vs non-research focused), tenure status (tenured or not), and perceptions of work conditions (salary and workload; workplace climate). Another set of control variables assess three previously discussed motivational factors for academic mobility. A detailed summary of the variables and measures is reported in Table 3. This study applies hierarchical linear

regression analyses, first with control variables only, and second with independent variables added to the previous model. The functional form for the regression analysis is:

> Dependent variable (intention to leave) = *f* [control variables (socio-demographic and institutional factors, work conditions, motivational factors) + independent variables (cultural advantage, acculturation)]

Table 3. Variables and measurement

Variables	Measurement
Dependent variable	
Intention to Leave	I often think about leaving Korea. (5-point Likert scale)[1]
Control variables	
Gender	Male=1, Female=0
Academic discipline	STEM=1, Non-STEM=0
Type of university	Research focused=1, Non-research focused=0
Salary satisfaction	5-point Likert scale[2]
Workload satisfaction	5-point Likert scale[3]
Open and inclusive climate	Measured by the mean of two survey items: (1) Sufficient opportunities for international faculty members to participate in committees; (2) My department welcomes the opinions of international faculty members. (5-point Likert scales)[4]
Tenure status	Tenured=1, Not tenured yet or Non-tenure track= 0
Motivated by poor home-country job market	Difficulty finding employment in my home country
Motivated by career advancement	To advance my career competitiveness
Motivated by interest in Korea	Interest in Korea and the Korean culture (all 5-point Likert scales) [5]
Independent variables	
Ethnicity	Ethnic Korean =1, Others =0
Spousal ethnicity	Korean spouse= 1, Others= 0
Degree of acculturation	Mean of two survey items: (1) I often feel that I am increasingly becoming 'more Korean'; (2) I mix Korean and my home country's culture in my life (5-point Likert scales)[6] (Pearson correlation coefficient: .498)

Notes: [1&5&6] 1 (Not true at all) to 5 (Very true) [2&3] 1 (Not satisfied at all) to 5 (Extremely satisfied); [4] 1 (Very weak) to 5 (Very strong)

Findings

Descriptive statistics

Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for the key variables. The mean for international faculty members' intention to leave was 2.82 (*SD* = 1.43). Respondents expressed somewhat less satisfaction with salary than workload, and the level of openness and inclusivity in the workplace perceived by respondents was somewhat low. As for factors influencing the decision to pursue careers at Korean universities, motivation driven by interest in Korea and its culture was the highest, followed by motivation derived by career advancement, and, finally, poor job market conditions in the respondents' home countries.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for key variables

	Total Average (SD)	**Ethnically Korean (n=42)**	**Non-ethnically Korean (n=283)**	**t-value**	**With Korean Spouse (n= 121)**	**Without Korean Spouse (n= 204)**	**t-value**
Intention to Leave Korea	2.82 (1.43)	2.95 (1.43)	2.80 (1.43)	-.650	2.75 (1.42)	2.86 (1.44)	.644
Salary	2.95 (1.25)	2.50 (1.24)	3.02 (1.23)	2.537*	2.84 (1.26)	3.02 (1.24)	1.230
Workload	3.36 (1.17)	3.07 (1.19)	3.41 (1.16)	1.737†	3.19 (1.23)	3.47 (1.12)	2.064*
Open and inclusive climate	2.40 (1.16)	2.65 (1.15)	2.36 (1.16)	-1.540	2.44 (1.10)	2.37 (1.20)	-.489
Poor job market in home country	2.39 (1.42)	2.05 (1.10)	2.44 (1.46)	1.684†	2.20 (1.36)	2.51 (1.45)	1.897†
Career development	3.10 (1.37)	2.69 (1.19)	3.16 (1.39)	2.063*	2.65 (1.19)	3.36 (1.40)	4.624***
Interest in Korean culture	3.38 (1.25)	3.36 (1.46)	3.38 (1.22)	.121	3.34 (1.32)	3.40 (1.21)	.411
Degree of acculturation	3.48 (1.04)	3.69 (0.64)	3.45 (1.06)	-1.407	3.66 (0.98)	3.38 (1.06)	-2.380*

† p < 0.1, * p <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001

Lastly, the average perceived level of international faculty members' degree of acculturation to Korean society was 3.48 (*SD* = 1.04), which represents some level of integration (Berry, 1997) for a number of international faculty members in Korea.

Furthermore, one of the stated goals of this study is to ascertain whether international faculty members' degree of acculturation and intention to leave differ by their ethnic background and spousal ethnicity. Descriptive statistics and t-tests (see Table 4) indicate that although not statistically significant, international faculty members with Korean ethnicity reported higher levels of intention to leave compared to their counterparts. As for the spouse variable, international faculty members married to Korean spouses reported a lower intention to leave compared to their counterparts. Moreover, although these two cohorts reported a higher perceived degree of acculturation than their counterparts, a statistically significant difference was only found in the comparison to the group with Korean spouses. Additionally, the perceived level of satisfaction with workload, and with two of three mobility-related motivational factors, differed significantly between groups.

Regression analyses

Two regression models are undertaken to unearth the previously discussed impacts of multiple factors potentially impacting respondents' intention to leave. The variance inflation factor (VIF) statistics indicated no problems with multicollinearity in any of the models.

The results from model 1, which investigates the relationship between international faculty members' intention to leave and control variables (e.g., socio-demographic factors, discipline, institution type, perceived work conditions, and mobility-related motivational factors) show that all variables related to work conditions are significantly associated with the dependent variable. The perceived level of work climate openness and inclusivity (ß = -.200, $p < .001$) was the strongest predictor among the work condition variables, followed by satisfaction with salary (ß = -.174, $p < .01$), and workload (ß = -.140, $p < .01$). On the other hand, tenure status (ß = .093, $p < 0.1$) was positively associated with an intention to leave, meaning that those with tenured status were more likely to leave the country. In addition, two mobility-related motivational factors significantly predicted the level of intention to leave. Motivation derived from a poor job market in the home country (ß = .134, $p < .05$) was positively associated with intention to leave, whereas motivation derived by interest in Korea significantly reduced intention to leave (ß = -.224, $p < .001$).

Model 2 integrates independent variables, namely culturally advantaged groups such as ethnically Korean international faculty members and respondents with Korean spouses, and degree of acculturation. Results show that the degree of acculturation is a significant predictor and has a negative relationship (ß = -.158, $p < .01$) with intention to leave. However, the other independent variables for Korean ethnicity and the presence of a Korean spouse are not significantly related to the dependent variable. The effect of control variables such as satisfaction with salary (ß = -.174, $p < .01$), workload (ß = -.127, $p < .05$),

perception of an open and inclusive climate (ß = -.198, $p < .001$), and mobility-related motivation factors such as poor home country job market (ß = .124, $p < .05$), and interest in Korea (ß = -.170, $p < .01$) remain significant. However, the significance of tenure status disappears in model 2. Other socio-demographic factors such as gender, discipline, university type, and tenure status do not play a significant role.

Table 5. Hierarchical linear regression analysis results

	Variables	Model 1 Standardized Coefficients (S.E.)	Model 2 Standardized Coefficients (S.E.)
Control variables	Male	.004 (.198)	.005 (.199)
	Age	-.059 (.001)	-.052 (.001)
	Years in Korea	-.031 (.011)	.007 (.011)
	STEM discipline	-.012 (.156)	-.004 (.155)
	Research focused	.008 (.155)	.006 (.155)
	Salary	**-.174**** **(.066)**	**-.174**** **(.066)**
	Workload	**-.140**** **(.065)**	**-.127*** **(.065)**
	Open and inclusive climate	**-.200***** **(.066)**	**-.198***** **(.066)**
	Tenure status	**.093**† **(.179)**	.064 (.181)
	Poor job market at home country	**.134*** **(.052)**	**.124*** **(.052)**
	Career development	.028 (.057)	.040 (.057)
	Interest in Korea and Korean culture	**-.224***** **(.060)**	**-.170**** **(.064)**
Independent variables	Korean ethnicity		.049 (.227)
	Korean spouse		-.029 (.163)
	Acculturation		**-.158**** **(.077)**
Constant		5.077***	5.472***
Adjusted *R*-squared		.216	.231

† p < 0.1, * p <.05, ** p <.01, *** p <.001

Discussion

The findings from this study show that, after controlling for other factors, international faculty members who were more interested in, and culturally adjusted to the Korean culture showed lower levels of intention to leave. This finding is in line with acculturation theories emphasizing that international

sojourners' failure to effectively adjust to their host country's culture is a major cause of their decision to leave (Berry, 1997). This study also found that the role of culturally advantaged groups—those who are either ethnic Korean or living with a Korean spouse, did not report a significantly lower level of intention to leave Korea than their counterparts without Korean ethnicity or a Korean spouse. Consistent with earlier turnover studies, motivational factors, and work-related satisfaction (e.g., salary, workload, workplace climate) turned out to have an effect on international faculty members' intention to leave. A poor job market in the home country was also significantly important in relation to their decision to leave. This section discusses these results vis-à-vis the Korean culture and the Korean higher education system.

The Korean culture is characterized by a high degree of collectivism (a group-oriented culture) with high power distance (people are generally accepting of differences in status) (Kim & Kim, 2010). The culture of the Korean higher education system is heavily influenced by the macro culture, one that strongly emphasizes Confucian personal as well as socio-political values (Kim, 2005; Lee, 2001). As previously mentioned, however, some of these very facets of the Korean culture hinder the successful acculturation of many foreign professionals, and have been pointed out as key factors for their departure (Kraeh et al., 2015). Junior faculty in Korean universities, for example, are often reluctant to actively express their opinion at faculty meetings, and senior, primarily male, faculty members make most critical decisions (Lee, 2001; Shin et al., 2015). In addition, there are unwritten rules for academics at Korean institutions, for example when dealing with promotion and tenure reviews, in part because Korean is a high-context language (see Gress & Shin, 2020b). Many Korean universities, though not officially, require "service" of their faculty members, especially junior faculty members, non-disciplinary activities that go beyond service-related duties as envisaged by scholars from the West (Shin et al., 2015). Moreover, the exclusive and closed nature of the academic culture in Korean higher education often manifests in the "academic inbreeding" issue, where the social inclusion and hegemony of academics are fundamentally shaped by their undergraduate degree-awarding institutions (Shin et al., 2016). Such a rigid academic culture is one of the key factors that even pushes local students and academics to study and work abroad (Kim, 2008). These complex hidden rules and quasi-obligatory service roles are taken as givens for most Korean academics, though it is understandably not easy for international faculty members to grasp these linguistic undertones, understand the organizational cultural norms, or to participate in service outside of their given areas of expertise (Gress & Shin, 2020b). This may help to explain the importance of workload and workplace climate in the present study.

Indeed, previous studies reported international faculty members' challenges when attempting to acculturate and to integrate into the Korean academic system, leading to turnover issues. For example, in a single-university, Korea-based study, Kim (2016) pointed out that international faculty members' roles were much more limited than regular Korean faculty members, and that such "systemic disempowerment" led to the risk of "mass departure" for many international faculty members. Similarly, Kim et al. (2022), in a single-university qualitative piece, pointed out that international faculty members'

mobility plans for the future varied based on their perceived adjustment to Korean society (acculturation) and university organizational culture. It is therefore important for Korean universities to pay more attention to the acculturation aspect of international faculty members when they invite them. Given the individual questions used to construct the acculturation variable, the results suggested that this may be as much a process of enculturation (mixing one's own culture and a new culture) as it is acculturation (giving oneself over to a new culture at the expense of one's own culture) (Weinreich, 2009). Based on advice from previous studies, Korean host universities might designate mentors (e.g., Dunham-Taylor et al., 2008), and social networking assistance and cross-cultural training (Chu & Morrison, 2011) for newly hired international faculty members to help their adjustment to their new socio and cultural environments.

On the other hand, one of the key findings from this study was that the role of Korean ethnicity and the presence of a Korean spouse did not significantly affect their intention to leave. Results from this study imply that although cultural familiarity, whether owing to ethnicity or to the presence of a Korean spouse, may help to ameliorate daily inconveniences, it may not be enough to influence a decision to leave. The t-test results from this study, for example, showed that international faculty members with Korean ethnicity or a Korean spouse reported lower levels of satisfaction with their salaries and workloads. In a similar vein, a recent study by Gress (2022) pointed out that international faculty members at Korean universities with ethnic Korean backgrounds spent significantly more hours on administrative work compared to their counterparts. Taken together these results potentially explain the "in-between" status and complex positionality of international faculty members with Korean ethnic backgrounds. For example, they are hired as foreigners by nationality, and therefore expected to teach content in English and to publish almost exclusively in international journals, yet they are also viewed as Korean and therefore subject to the aforementioned positionality of junior faculty (e.g., with extensive and broad-based administrative and service expectations). Given this cultural context, ethnic Korean international faculty members may experience cultural clashes when they interact with native academics who are insensitive toward their positionality. As a result, while Korea may be sufficiently "sticky" in that this cohort is no more inclined to leave, Korean universities should be careful about their level of work and subsequent burnout and acculturative stress. The question also remains as to whether or not a protracted strategy to hire ethnically Korean international faculty members is well-suited to long-term globalization goals and the integration of all international faculty members. For example, ethnic Korean international faculty might not contribute as significantly to improving the overall cultural diversity at Korean universities (Gress & Shin, 2020a).

Accordingly, the climate of the workplace should also be an important consideration that can enhance the successful integration of all international faculty members at Korean universities. As Altbach and Yudkevich (2017) concluded, lower levels of integration in academic units led to low international faculty member work satisfaction levels. Similarly, some research pointed out that the quality (not quantity) of department-level interactions is integral to faculty satisfaction (Norman et al.,

2006). Taken in conjunction with the previously discussed results, Korean universities would benefit from the creation of open and inclusive work atmospheres (see, also, Gress, 2022). This, as others have also suggested, may be facilitated by the use of English in the workplace as well as active solicitation and inclusion of international faculty members' opinions (Gress & Shin, 2020b; Jonasson et al., 2018).

However, while some authors suggested that such synergistic organizational change to Korean universities would be welcomed Korean universities, departments and faculty are generally more status quo-oriented (see Gress & Shin, 2020a). Part of this may stem from the fact that such support and change-oriented measures may have a detrimental impact on native faculty (Jonasson et al., 2018), a sentiment echoed in findings presented in Gress and Shin (2020b) in their study of senior managers' perception of international faculty members at a major Korean university. Considering these realities, some universities in Korea have recently taken a different approach to their recruitment strategy in order to strengthen international faculty members' inclusivity and to prevent their becoming mere "token" additions to superficial internationalization drives. For example, some universities seek to create a more inclusive work environment by achieving a 'critical mass' of international faculty members in their colleges or departments (e.g., by filling approximately half of the professoriate with non-Koreans) (Song, 2020).

Lastly, findings from this study showed that international faculty members' earlier motivation to expatriate (derived by an interest in the host country) was a significant predictor in reducing international faculty members' intention to leave. Such a result implies that *interest* (not necessarily aptitude) in the host society and its culture before arriving plays an important role in retaining international faculty members. Given this context, it would be helpful for Korean universities to assess an applicant's level of interest in Korea during the recruitment process as this may improve retention. Similarly, Tanova and Ajayi (2016) recommended that applicants be screened in advance for their potential to adapt to a new culture. In addition, this study found that international faculty members who felt pushed to work in Korea due to a poor home-country job market were less likely to stay for the long term. As previous studies pointed out, international faculty members often considered their time at Korean universities to be "stepping stones" or "wait out" times until they could find suitable opportunities at Western universities (Kim, 2016; Kim et al., 2022). Similarly, in one Korea-based study (Shin & Gress, 2018), upper management at a Korean university voiced concern that invited academics may simply leave for a position outside of Korea after having built up their professional credentials. The impact of the home-country job market-related motivational variable may also therefore help to explain why job security (e.g., tenure status) did not emerge as significant in improving international faculty member retention, yet salary did.

Conclusion

The percentage of international faculty members at Korean universities grew rapidly from the early 2000s up until 2013, at which time it began a precipitous decline. Korean universities need to address international faculty member retention issues. Indeed, quantitative growth does not necessarily mean that international faculty members are sufficiently integrating into their universities and host society. This study concluded that international faculty members' retention depended on pre-departure levels of interest in the country and their degree of acculturation in the host country, in this case in the context of Korea. In addition, workplace considerations (e.g., salary, workload and workplace climate) and the earlier motivation to work in Korea (e.g., poor home-country job market condition, interest in Korea) also influenced faculty intent to depart. Although some qualitative studies on international faculty members' acculturation experiences exist, and some quantitative studies include one or more of the abovementioned variables, their findings have not been extrapolated via larger studies using a wider range of data, and none have integrated all of the above considerations. The findings offered in the present study, in short, have implications for research on international faculty members acculturation as well as academic mobility and retention.

Limitations to the study and directions for future research should of course be mentioned. People leave organizations for various reasons. In their seminal work, March and Simon (1993) proposed two general reasons: the perceived desirability of movement (e.g., satisfaction, affective organizational commitment), and perceived ease of movement. Unfortunately, this study focused on the former, but was unable to accommodate the latter due to a lack of relevant variables, for example perceptions of alternative job opportunities. Future studies could pursue this additional line of inquiry. Future studies could also benefit from more recent models of turnover, for example the theory of job embeddedness (Mitchell et al., 2001). This theory suggests that employees who are more embedded in the organization and community are less likely to leave. The present study partially accommodated the key arguments of this theory by stressing the importance of acculturation, which reflects off-the-job factors in job embeddedness theory. Still, a simultaneous examination of international faculty members' intra and extra-organizational embeddedness would be a viable addition to considerations put forth in the present work.

Moreover, although the current study provides a national-level, empirical examination of international faculty members' intention to leave Korea, limitations connected to the data need to be mentioned. For example, as one reviewer inclined, the dependent variable used in this study is measured by a single survey item, thus raising possible concern over validity. However, previous studies have justified the usage of a single-item measure, particularly for constructs measuring expectancy values in exploratory research to include departure intention (e.g., Meriläinen et al., 2019). Further, the acculturation variable used in this study could be strengthened by using more standardized rating scales. This would help to generalize and compare the findings from the current study to others more effectively.

In addition, there could be plausible impacts from the addition of a fourth cohort to this study, namely ethnic Korean international faculty members with Korean spouses. While this unfortunately could not be more thoroughly investigated due to the limited sample size, it would be an interesting addition to future studies. In the end, readers should consider potential limitations to the data when assessing findings from this study.

Qualitative input would have helped to build out more nuanced understandings of acculturation experiences for ethnic Koreans and those with Korean spouses as results indicated that factors influencing intention to leave may differ for these groups compared to their counterparts. The ethnic Korean group could also be further disaggregated (e.g., Korean American vs returnees who became naturalized foreign citizens) and investigated to ascertain whether there are differences between these cohorts. The current study could not investigate such differences due to the limited size of the sample and the information on the ethnically Korean group. This issue is particularly critical at a time when the recruitment of international faculty members with Korean ethnicity is increasing due to difficulties associated with attracting non-Korean academics.

In addition, follow up research might focus on more in-depth study of successful and less successful acculturation strategies. Presumably, international faculty members with effective acculturation strategies might better acclimate to life in Korea and at Korean universities. Both host universities and international faculty members might learn from these experiences. Follow up comparative research in the East Asian region (e.g., Japan, China, and Taiwan) would also be most welcomed, since the detailed strategies for recruiting international faculty members vary by country within the region (e.g., Japanese universities hire more international faculty members from neighboring countries).

Lastly, future research should focus on how the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has impacted global academic mobility, something data for the present study could not capture. Academic mobility is now profoundly constrained due to changes in political and environmental factors under pandemic circumstances. Inevitably, significant alterations to the push-and-pull factors influencing international faculty member mobility may result. A more thorough investigation that reflects such complexities and new developments will provide a more in-depth understanding of contemporary academic mobility.

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