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The influence of contact effect and contact situation factors on the perception of Korean university students toward international students

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze Korean students' perceptions of international students and provide implications for resolving conflicts between the two groups. Specifically, the contact effect and contact situation factors were analyzed for their influence on Korean students' positive and negative attitudes toward international students and university systems related to international students. This study set up the following variables: contact experience, perception of contact situation, multicultural competence, perception of class avoidance, perception of foreign student system, and willingness to expand exchanges with foreign students, and conducted a multiple regression analysis to analyze the influence of contact experience and perception of contact situation on the other variables. For analysis, data from the survey results of 163 students at S-Women's University in Seoul were used. The results of the analysis showed, first, a contact effect in which more contact experience with foreigners and international students led to more positive perceptions of international students, including increased multicultural competence and decreased perceptions of classroom victimization. Second, equality and common goals in contact situations led to increased multicultural competence. Third, a higher perception of contact situation support and assistance may be associated with a lower perception of classroom victimization. Fourth, higher levels of perceived common goals in contact situations were associated with a more positive perception of the international student system. Fifth, the higher the contact experience, the more positive the perception of expanding exchanges with foreign students, while the higher the perception of support and assistance in the contact situation, the more negative the perception of expanding exchanges with foreign students. Sixth, the improvement of multicultural competence had a positive effect on Korean students' willingness to expand exchanges with international students. These findings suggest that a review of systems and policies at the university and government levels is necessary.

Keywords: International students, Korean university students, contact hypothesis, contact effect, contact situation factors

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1. Research Necessity and Objectives

The influx of international students in South Korea has steadily increased from 12,314 in 2003, 83,848 in 2010, 104,262 in 2016, 160,165 in 2019, 153,695 in 2020, to 152,281 in 2022, with consistent growth even after the spread of COVID-19 (Ministry of Education, 2023). This continuous increase in the number of international students is attributed to both national-level support for attracting foreign students and individual efforts by universities to recruit international students. The Ministry of Education introduced the Study Korea 2020 Project in October 2012 to attract 200,000 excellent international students to Korea from 2013 to 2020. The project included initiatives such as expanding scholarship funds for international students to KRW 100 billion by 2015, establishing the Study in Korea system that supports the entire study process around the clock, and establishing the National Institute for International Education, a professional support organization. With these efforts, the goal was to raise the proportion of international students in higher education institutions from 2% in 2009 to 5.4% by 2020, to create an internationalized university campus environment, and to contribute to corporate globalization by vitalizing the employment of foreign students in Korean companies (Park & Song, 2013). However, as the government's initiatives to attract more international students were underway, the prediction that the overall student population in higher education would decrease was becoming a reality. Many Korean universities began implementing strategies to attract and retain international students, such as the rural universities' strategies for international students to secure enrollment and the metropolitan universities' strategies for international students to enhance their financial conditions (Ministry of Education, 2015).

As the number of international students increased and the number of foreign students enrolled in universities grew, research on this issue became more active. Studies emerged focusing on policies to expand the recruitment of foreign students and promote their settlement during their study period. There were also studies on factors influencing the perception of foreign students and various aspects of their settlement and how they sought for alternatives (Ministry of Education, 2014).

It is anticipated that the gradually increasing trend in the size of the international student population will continue in the mid- to long-term. The university's financial structure is not expected to improve in the short term, given the decrease in revenues and the increase in expenditures affected by issues such as prolonged tuition freezes, inflation, economic stagnation, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering that the continuous decline in the student population and the pressure for structural adjustments in universities may most likely emphasize the evaluation index of universities, such as the recruitment rate of new students and retention rate of students, universities are strongly aware of the need to attract international students for financial and student enrollment stability. Many universities, such as local universities, large metropolitan private universities, and even top universities with competitive admissions, are putting forth various efforts to secure the number of enrolled students, such as establishing departments that are exclusive for foreign students and expanding scholarship programs (Shin & Lee & Lee, 2018).

The expansion of the recruitment of international students, particularly in universities located in regional areas, is a response strategy to situations where domestic student enrollment is not being fulfilled. However, the expansion of the recruitment of international students by universities with competitive admission standards to secure their financial stability requires an expansion of educational resources, such as infrastructure and faculty. If only the number of students increases without preparing necessary education resources, their educational conditions may rather deteriorate. Under the current Higher Education Act, universities have leeway to admit foreign students beyond the regular quota through the special admissions processes. Consequently, the increase in overall student enrollment may result in non-compliance with various criteria based on university establishment regulations. Such an increase in foreign students is associated with key issues, such as the stable adjustment of foreign students to life in Korea and the possibility of their settlement in Korea. Meanwhile, Korean students may experience a deterioration in their educational conditions. Along this line, the expansion of the recruitment of international students may lead to new dynamics in challenges and issues not previously accentuated, such as conflicts between local and foreign students. Given this situation, recent studies have been presented addressing practical issues related to the expansion of the recruitment of international students. These studies explore the Korean students' perceptions of international students, reveal the issues arising from efforts to attract more international students from diverse perspectives, and examine improvement measures (Kim, 2018 ; Han & Yu, 2022 ; An, 2020).

The current study referred to previous study that have analyzed Korean students' perceptions of international students in order to analyze factors that influence such perceptions (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). As the margin of increase in the number of international students grows, potential conflicts between Korean students and international students have already begun to surface. Therefore, it is crucial to analyze the factors contributing to such conflicts and evaluate the

policies and alternatives that universities and the government should consider at this juncture. By analyzing the positive and negative perceptions of Korean students towards international students, this study aimed to explore future directions and strategies for related measures or policies to solve this problem. Previous studies tended to emphasize measures necessary for international students, but this study aimed to shed light on the perceptions of Korean students towards international students to minimize conflicts between the two groups, as well as implications that may resolve the factors that contribute to conflicts between the two groups. To this end, existing literature that found that contact effects and contact situation factors impact the Korean students' perceptions of international students was referred to, and a comprehensive analysis was conducted on the impact of contact effects and contact situation factors on the positive or negative perceptions of Korean students towards international students as well as on how they shape related university policies. Building upon the analysis results, this study aimed to formulate mid- to long-term improvement directions and strategies at the university and government levels.

2. Previous Studies

2.1 Basic Concept of Contact Theory

Contact can be divided into direct or indirect one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many contact face-to-face, or through communication-based means. Contact is known to impact the development of skills to share the perspectives of others, through which humans increase empathy towards others. Such characteristics of contact are also evident in intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Intergroup contact, defined by interactions between members of distinct groups, facilitates an expanded understanding of the other group while diminishing anxiety and perceived risk associated with encountering different groups, in turn, bringing about changes in intergroup attitudes and reducing prejudice. Such intergroup contact leads to the adoption of the views of another group, empathy, and the discovery of mutual similarities, thereby fostering a sense of intimacy. As feelings of threat towards other groups stem from ignorance about the other groups, it is said that increasing understanding through intergroup contact may decrease prejudice and increase positive attitudes. In a diversified social environment where diversity is secured, opportunities for contact with individuals different from oneself increase. The actual contact that occurs through these opportunities significantly influences the frequency of contact, naturally contributing to a positive effect that is the decrease in intergroup tension. Contact theory has been developed upon such perspectives. Contact theory holds implications for resolving conflicts between Korean and international students in Korean universities. The fundamental hypothesis posits that expanding contact will positively impact conflict resolution between the two groups (Hewstone, 2003).

Contact theory is suitable for describing relationships between groups with different identities within the same environment. It originated from a hypothesis which posited that sustained and positive contact with a different group can mitigate prejudice against minority groups and improve relationships (Allport, 1954). As such, it is argued that direct contact with other groups, together with processes such as joint goal-setting and interaction, can lead to improved intergroup interaction and positive evaluations of other groups. Since the introduction of contact theory, numerous studies have been conducted, and it is widely utilized as a social psychological intervention to reduce prejudice and stereotypes against different groups (Pettigrew & Linda 2006). In contact theory, contact is composed of behavioral, affective, and cognitive factors. Behavioral factors refer to positive interactions between groups. When such interactions occur, intergroup acceptance increases, reducing prejudice against the other group and increasing openness towards members of that other group. Emotional factors play a potential mediating role in contact with another group. Positive emotions foster empathy towards members of the other group and contribute to decreasing prejudice. Cognitive factors are rooted in the assumption that ignorance instills prejudice. Therefore, getting to know others is an important step in the way intergroup contact improves intergroup relationships. Previous studies on the process of contact instilling positive perceptions of other groups found significant mediation models in which contact and interaction with other groups lead to a decrease in anxiety levels prior to contact, thus increasing in positive perceptions of the other group (Turner & Crisp & Lambert, 2007). Despite the positive perceptions associated with contact, it is essential to note that merely bringing different groups into contact within the same space does not automatically eliminate biases or foster spontaneous positive relations (Ko, 2013). For meaningful improvements in intergroup relationships, specific conditions must be met. Four essential conditions are proposed for improving intergroup relations through contact. The first condition is equal status. Continuous and close contact must occur on an equal playing field. Contact under unequal conditions does not contribute to eliminating prejudice. The second condition is common goals between the groups. The third condition is intergroup cooperation and dependence. Daily interactions alone may not reduce prejudice and may even strengthen existing prejudice. The last condition is the support of the authorities. When these four conditions are met, there can be positive change. However, when intergroup contact is conducted when these conditions have not been met, the effect of contact may be limited or prejudice may be further reinforced (Allport, 1954). In addition to these four conditions, providing opportunities for qualitative contact that can

lead to the formation of friendships is discussed. The quality of contact is highlighted as more crucial than the quantity, and it is noted that negative experiences in intergroup contact can lead to increased prejudice and distance between groups. Contact itself does not automatically lead to an improvement in attitudes and perceptions of other groups nor does positive contact with a single member of another group lead to a positive image or perceptions of the entire other group. While contact tends to enhance positive emotions, these effects are not directly connected to an improvement in prejudice. Some studies have found that contact quality is more effective than contact quantity in reducing prejudice through intergroup contact. The quality of contact, rather than the quantity, and sincere contact experience with the other group are most effective in reducing anxiety and prejudice (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Moreover, negative contact experiences or poor relationship quality can potentially increase prejudice against foreigners. In other words, the contact effect is influenced by past contact experience. While those with past positive contact have a positive contact effect, those with past negative contact have heightened anxiety about other groups, making intergroup interaction more difficult. Therefore, increasing opportunities for intergroup contact through changes in the physical environment or intentional context provision cannot be seen to diminish intergroup anxieties and threats. Instead, providing opportunities for positive contact will lead to an increase in contact opportunities (Matejskova & Leitner 2011). In the context of higher education institutions like universities, it is argued that they provide favorable conditions for meeting the four conditions of contact opportunities. Interactions or classes with international students are suitable conditions to better understand other cultures and lower prejudice. Such intergroup contact offers insights into external and internal groups, and leads to an understanding that the norms and practices within the internal group are not what maintains and manages the society. Moreover, as internal group contact impacts prejudice against the external group, a decrease in internal group contact may lead to a decrease in prejudice against the external group while it does not influence the evaluation of the internal group. Thus, in intergroup contact situations, it is crucial to focus on understanding which types of contact situations lead to changes in intergroup interactions and attitudes, rather than simply studying whether intergroup contact reduces prejudice (Ko, 2013). Experiences of intergroup contact are significant in both quantitative and qualitative aspects, fostering cooperative and positive attitudes between groups (Matejskova & Leitner 2011). Contact does not always yield positive effects, and its impact may vary based on group characteristics. Intergroup contact effect may manifest differently depending on the group, and high contact frequency does not always lead to a mediating effect of anxiety or self-exposure. As contact increases, mutual familiarity rises, allowing for shared perspectives. However, some studies argue that it does not significantly impact the actual decrease in mutual anxiety and prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). In reviewing contact theory, it is evident that contact experience must be increased to increase positive effects and enhance the conflictual situation between international students studying in Korea and Korean students, to which end a comprehensive approach that takes into consideration the qualitative aspect of contact is needed.

2.2 Analysis of Previous Studies

Previous studies have analyzed the differential effects of contact experience with foreigners on Korean students' perceptions of foreign students and found that contact experiences, such as foreigner friends, having taken classes with foreigners, and travels abroad, actually have a negative influence on their perceptions on international students at times (Kang, 2016). Studies analyzing Korean students' perceptions of international students identify various typologies, including 'positive coexistence,' 'cliquish defense,' 'egocentric judgment,' 'personal harm avoidance,' and 'relationship avoidance,' and presented the need to promote cooperation and communication between the two groups (Lee & Shim, 2018). In addition, the studies highlight the need to manage issues related to international students that arise from the internationalization phenomenon of Korean university campuses; resolve such issues through communication strategies; and establish international student recruitment and management policies on both governmental and university levels based on the consent from Korean students (Yi & Shin, 2018). Another study has recently found that Korean students who have experienced the COVID-19 pandemic are showing rejection towards international students as well as expressions of strong aversion, such as categorizing issues related to international students to be collective attributes. This study suggests that such perception towards international students is due to the defensive nature of Korean university students who are forced into a competitive environment with unattended feelings of anxiety and threat (Kang, 2022). On the other hand, some studies have found contact with international students to have a positive effect. A study found that the number of interactions with international students by Korean students has been found to have a significant impact on cultural self-efficacy and cultural knowledge while the diversity of contact has a significant impact on cultural openness. This study discusses fostering multicultural competence among Korean university students in a situation where members of the university culture are being diversified (Choi, 2019). As such, it has been found that the experience of contact with foreigners, international students, and foreign cultures has a significant impact on both positive and negative perceptions of foreigners, international students, and foreign cultures.

Similar studies have been conducted in the United States, which has the world's largest higher education study-abroad industry. An examination of American undergraduate students' views on Chinese international students brought to light negative perceptions of their lower English proficiency and reserved demeanor. However, American students with perspective-taking abilities exhibited open-minded attitudes when Chinese students share their viewpoints (Zhu & Bresnahan, 2018). Furthermore, a study underscored that racial discrimination hampers the acceptance of racially diverse individuals among American students, emphasizing the importance of fostering effective integration through multicultural education (Katz & Gravelin & McCabe & White, 2021).

Another study that conducted a meta-analysis of a contact hypothesis on the impact of contact experience on attitudes toward ethnic or racial groups found that contact experience affects positive perception that reduces prejudice only in situations that meet contact conditions and provide circumstantial and contextual information. In other words, the study argues that the positive formation of perceptions is more likely to occur when mediating conditions are comprehensively applied, rather than when individual variables like contact experience are independently applied (Kang, 2016). These mediating conditions can be prescribed as contact situations, while contact situation is defined as contact experience and quality of contact. Therefore, for contact experience to positively influence attitudes toward foreigners or foreign cultures, consideration must be given to the quality of contact and the specific contact situation (Kang, 2022). These implications have already been presented through academic approaches to the contact hypothesis (Yi & Shin, 2018). Studies have found that for intergroup contact to have positive effects, the contact situation must be examined. Such contact situations can be seen as a mediating factor that enables the positive effects of contact experiences, such as increased positive perceptions of foreign students, cultures, and different races and ethnicities. Also, the contact situation is comprised of four elements: equal status, cooperation, common goals, and support by a social authority (Yi & Shin, 2018).

Analyzing the results of domestic and international studies, it can be confirmed that negative perceptions exist among native students toward international students, and that contact experience and contact situations have a mediating nature as direct factors in the creation of such perceptions. The conflicts between international students and native students are important issues that must be resolved as they are in themselves problematic and also create unfavorable conditions, environments, and contexts for the university's educational and research activities. The causes of conflicts between native and international students include cultural exclusivity, lack of contact and communication, and the relative sense of deprivation among native students. Factors proposed for conflict resolution include an open-minded attitude, multicultural competence development, contact effect, and increased contact experience. Such results highlight the need to strengthen the contact effect and to review the element of contact situation in order to see a positive effect from contact experience. Therefore, for effective conflict resolution without exacerbation, diverse research on this topic is needed, and the government and universities need to seek and assess specific response measures and future directions after taking into consideration the structural characteristics.

Previous research has presented an understanding of the levels and degrees of Korean students' perceptions of international students, reasons behind the creation of negative perceptions of international students, an explanation of the study environment in Korea for international students as perceived by international students, and the level of and reasons for international students' negative perceptions of Korean students. While diagnosing and understanding these phenomena and the approaches that are needed, conflicts arising from various factors, such as the cultural differences between groups, require support and institutional improvement to create mutually positive perceptions, such as creating an environment, context, and atmosphere for overall conflict resolution. Preventing conflicts between the group of international students and the group of Korean students and stably maintaining and expanding a positive situation are matters that must be contemplated by universities, in order to achieve their goal and fundamental mission of ensuring the students' learning rights and contributing socially and nationally through the growth and development of their students.

In order to resolve future conflicts between international students and domestic students, this study comprehensively analyzed factors of contact situation to seek ways to strengthen the contact effect that impacts the easing of conflicts between the two groups. Intergroup contact has a positive effect in a contact situation that fulfills the four elements: equal status, cooperation, common goals, and support by a social authority (Yi & Shin, 2018). Universities and the government need to provide appropriate contact situations between domestic and international students within universities in the future, and must consider measures, programs, or education for conflict resolution based on the perceptions of contact situations. Therefore, based on the findings, this study aimed to present implications that are needed to set specific response measures, such as related systems or programs, and to conduct activities such as investigating related demands.

3. Research Content and Research Method

3.1 Research Content

This study intended to analyze the relationship between the positive and negative perceptions of Korean students of international students and the relationship between the four elements of contact situation and the perception of Korean students. Based on the analysis, this study hopes to propose directions and strategies for response in the mid- to long-term.

The research questions were designed to analyze the impact of exchange levels and perceptions of contact situations on various perceptions of Korean students toward international students to assess the contact effect with international students. These questions were needed to conduct a comparison analysis of the size of influence with other perception levels (Kang, 2016). First, does the level of exchange with international students influence perceptions of contact situations, the enhancement of multicultural competence among Korean students, negative perceptions of international students, perceptions of the international student system, and the willingness to expand exchanges with international students? Second, do the exchange levels with international students and the perception of the four elements of contact situation influence the enhancement of multicultural competence among Korean students, negative perceptions of international students, perceptions of the international student system, and the willingness to expand exchanges with international students? Third, do the exchange levels with international students, the perception of the four elements of contact situation, enhancement of multicultural competence among Korean students, and perceptions of the international student system influence the Korean students' willingness to expand exchanges with international students?

3.2 Research Method

Referring to the survey items used in previous studies, this study conducted a survey on Korean students on their contact experience with international students at their universities and their perception level of elements of contact situations. Additionally, this study explored Korean students' positive and negative perceptions of their learning experiences with international students, their perceptions of the current international student system of their universities, and their aspirations for future expansions in exchanges with international students (Kang, 2016).

Contact experiences with international students is the level of exchange with international students and related awareness measured by examining factors such as the number of foreign friends, experiences of studying abroad, participation in exchange programs, involvement in both academic and extracurricular activities as well as club activities with international students. The perception of contact situations was measured by studying the level of perception of Korean students on the elements of contact situations, namely equality, cooperation, common goals, and support and assistance of affiliated institutions. Positive perceptions towards international students were measured by examining, with reference to previous studies, the Korean students' perceptions on whether interactions with international students contribute to the improvement of their multicultural competence (Kang, 2016). Negative perceptions towards international students were measured by examining whether the Korean students perceive negative effects on their learning activities due to the enrollment of international students. Perceptions of the international student system commonly operated by universities were measured by examining perceptions on "dormitory admissions," "scholarships," and "system related to grade processing." The academic year and major of the respondents were also collected for further analysis of respondent characteristics.

The survey targeted approximately 1,000 students at S Women's University in Seoul. The total number of respondents was 166, and statistical analysis for the study was based on 163 respondents.

The survey results were analyzed as follows. First, descriptive statistical values were analyzed to understand respondent characteristics. Second, the reliability and validity of the survey tool were verified through exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's α reliability analysis. Third, the correlation between major variables was analyzed. Fourth, to analyze the research questions, a multiple regression analysis model, as shown in Table 1, was established and analyzed. Regression analysis Model 1 sets the level of exchange with international students as an independent variable. The dependent variables are set as the perception of contact situation, enhancement of multicultural competence of Korean students, negative perceptions of international students, perceptions of the international student system, and willingness to expand exchange with international students. Model 1 is a model that verifies if the contact hypothesis is actually identified through the response data of this study. If the contact hypothesis theory is valid in the field of Korean higher education, it can be predicted that the independent variable of contact experience will have a statistically significant effect on various dependent variables. Model 2 sets both contact experiences and perception of contact situations as independent variables. The dependent variables were set as enhancement of multicultural

competence of Korean students, negative perceptions of international students, perceptions of the international student system, and willingness to expand exchange with international students. Model 2 is a model that includes contact experience, the four elements of contact experience, and perceptions of environment and context as independent variables. This model takes into account the findings of previous studies that found contact experience having a positive effect on intergroup conflict arising from contact experience when within the appropriate environment and context. Model 2 addresses the limitation of previous studies that did not comprehensively analyze the contact effect and the four elements of the contact situation. Model 3 is an analysis model that takes into consideration the objectives of this study. It was designed to identify the statistically significant variables in strengthening positive perceptions of Korean students towards exchanges with international students and school life, through which related implications were sought. Independent variables included contact experiences, perception of contact situations as independent variables, enhancement of multicultural competence of Korean students, negative perceptions on international students, and perceptions on the international student system. The dependent variable was the willingness to expand exchange with international students. JAMOVI 2.3 statistical package software was utilized for statistical analysis.

Table 1. Regression Model

Category	independent variables	Dependent variables
Model 1	1) Contact experience: Exchange level with foreigners	Perception of contact situation Strengthening multicultural competency of Korean students Negative perception towards international students (Perceiving them as obstacles in the Korean students' learning) Perception of the international student system Willingness to expand exchanges with international students
Model 2	1) Contact experience: Exchange level with foreigners 2) Perception of contact situation	Strengthening multicultural competency of Korean students Negative perception towards international students (Perceiving them as obstacles in the Korean students' learning) Perception of the international student system Willingness to expand exchanges with international students
Model 3	1) Contact experience: Exchange level with foreigners 2) Perception of contact situation 3) Strengthening multicultural competency of Korean students 4) Negative perception towards international students (Perceiving them as obstacles in the Korean students' learning) 5) Perception of the international student system	Willingness to expand exchanges with international students

4. Research Results

4.1 Respondent Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the 163 respondents are as shown in Table 2. The respondents are all Korean undergraduate students at the sampling university, and 149 (91.4%) are within the 19-24 age range. The breakdown by academic year showed that 119 respondents (11.7%) were 1st-year students, 44 respondents (27.0%) were 2nd-year students, 66 respondents (40.5%) were 3rd-year students, and 34 respondents (20.9%) were 4th-year students. In terms of academic disciplines, 110 respondents (67.5%) were in the Humanities and Social Sciences, 34 respondents (20.9%) in Natural Sciences and Medicine, 12 respondents (7.4%) in Arts and Physical Education, and 7 respondents (4.3%) fell into the 'Other' category. In terms of foreigner friends, 75 respondents (46.3%) had none, 43 respondents (26.5%) had 1-3 friends, 21 respondents (13.0%) had 4-6 friends, 9 respondents (5.6%) had 7-9 friends, and 14 respondents (8.6%) had 10 or more friends. As for overseas travel (period), 19 respondents (11.9%) had no experience, 35 respondents (21.9%) have been abroad for less than a week, 43 respondents (26.9%) have been abroad for 1-4 weeks, 27 respondents (16.9%) have been abroad for 1-6 months, and 36 respondents (22.5%) have been abroad for more than 6 months. Only 15 respondents (9.3%) had participated in an overseas university exchange program. Regarding participation in class on campus with international students, 60 respondents (37.0%) had no experience, 33 respondents (20.4%) had participated once, 31 respondents (19.1%) twice, 19 respondents (11.7%) 3-5 times, and 19 respondents (11.7%) six times or more. In terms of participation in club activities with international students, 110 respondents (67.9%) had no experience, 18 respondents (11.1%) had participated once, 14 respondents (8.6%) 2-4 times, and 20 respondents (12.3%) 5 times. It was also found that 18 respondents (11.1%) had participated in extracurricular programs with international students, while 27 respondents (16.7%) had engaged in mentorship activities or learning support programs for international students.

Table 2. Respondent Characteristics

Category		No. of Respondents	%	Category	No. of Respondents	%	
Year	1st year	19	11.7 %	Affiliated department, Academic discipline	Humanities and Social Science	110	67.5 %
	2nd year	44	27.0 %		Natural sciences and medicine	34	20.9 %
	3rd year	66	40.5 %		Arts and Physical Education	12	7.4 %
	4th year	34	20.9 %		Other	7	4.3 %
No. of foreigner friends	0	75	46.3 %	Overseas visit experience (Period)	None	19	11.9 %
	1~3	43	26.5 %		Less than a week	35	21.9 %
	4~6	21	13.0 %		1 week - 1 month	43	26.9 %
	7~9	9	5.6 %		1 - 6 months	27	16.9 %

	more than 10	14	8.6 %		more than 6 months	36	22.5 %
Participation in class with international students	none	60	37.0 %	Participation in club activities with international students	None	110	67.9 %
	1 time	33	20.4 %		1 time	18	11.1 %
	2 times	31	19.1 %		2~4 times	14	8.6 %
	3~5 times	19	11.7 %		5 times	20	12.3 %
	more than 6 times	19	11.7 %				

The analysis results of the average of key measurement variables are presented in Table 3. The level of exchange experience with international students was found to be 2.42 points on a 5-point Likert scale. This is lower than the midpoint of 3. Perceptions of equality during contact situations were found to be 3.52, perceptions of cooperation during contact situations were found to be 3.62, perceptions of common goals during contact situations were found to be 3.49, and perceptions of support and assistance during contact situations were found to be 3.53. All contact situation factors scored higher than the midpoint of 3, with the element of cooperation having the highest average value and the element of common goal having the lowest. Positive perceptions regarding the enhancement of a global mindset due to exchanges with international students scored an average of 4.19 on the 5-point Likert scale. Positive perceptions of expanding cultural perspectives scored 4.34, reducing aversion towards foreigners scored 3.96, and expectations of improvement in language proficiency scored 3.73. Expectations for a positive impact on understanding and broadening perspectives of other cultures were the highest, while expectations for language proficiency improvement were the lowest. Perceptions of the university's international student system are as follows. Positive responses to the idea of applying the same criteria for dormitory-related matters for both Korean and international students was 2.82, which is lower than the midpoint of 3. Applying the same criteria for scholarship programs scored 2.98 while the same criteria for grade processing was 3.01. The perception that various support systems and academic systems should operate under the same criteria for both Korean and international students was all below the midpoint of 3. Regarding the perceptions of the disadvantages when taking classes with international students, disadvantages in group work scored 2.47, while the decrease in class quality scored 1.54. Perceptions of an increase in psychological burdens related to classes scored 1.77, additional time spent for explanations by professors scored 1.83, and the need for separate classes for international students scored 3.31. The perception of disadvantages in taking classes with international students was low overall, but the perception of possible disadvantages during group work was relatively high. Due to such reasons, the average score for the need for separate classes was the highest. The hopes for expanded exchange with international students were found to be high too, with 4.42.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

Name of variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Name of variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Contact experience: Exchange level with foreigners	2.42	1.32	Contact situation: Equality	3.52	.90
Contact situation: Cooperation	3.62	.88	Contact situation: Common goal	3.49	.89
Contact situation: Support, Assistance	3.53	.94	Enhanced global mentality	4.19	.80
Expanded experience of other	4.34	.76	Reduced foreigner aversion	3.96	.91

cultures					
Enhancement of language proficiency	3.73	.99	Application of equal criteria for dormitories on international students	2.82	1.17
Application of equal criteria for scholarships on international students	2.98	.99	Application of equal criteria for grade processing on international students	3.01	.99
Disadvantages in group work in classes with international students	2.47	.95	Decrease in class quality of classes with international students	1.54	.59
Psychological burden for classes with international students	1.77	.95	Extended time for explanation by professors in classes with international students	1.83	.86
Separate classes for international students	3.31	1.02	Expansion of opportunities for exchange with international students	4.42	.78

4.2 Reliability and Validity Verification Results of the Survey Tool

The results of the reliability and validity verification of the survey tool, based on responses from 163 participants, are presented in Table 4. Exploratory factor analysis yielded a KMO value of .72, surpassing the threshold of .5. Bartlett’s test yielded $p < .001$, lower than the threshold of .05. Five factors were identified by extracting items with factor loadings of 0.3 or higher. The first factor is the degree of contact with foreigners, which includes measurement sub-items such as “perceptions towards the level of exchange with international students,” “participation in club activities,” “having foreigner friends,” “participation in class with foreigners,” and “visits overseas.” The second factor is multicultural competency, a positive effect from international students. The sub-items include “expansion of knowledge about other cultures,” “enhancement of global mindset,” “improvement of language proficiency,” and “reduction of aversion towards foreigners.” The third factor is “perceptions on classroom victimization due to international students, and the sub-items include “decrease in class quality,” “extension of explanation time,” “increase in psychological burden regarding classes,” “disadvantages in group work,” and “perception on the need for separate classes for international students.” The fourth factor is contact situation, and sub-items include “hierarchical and unequal relationships between international and Korean students,” “cooperative situations in a non-competitive environment,” “interdependence for achieving common goals,” and “elimination of explicit and implicit contact regulation authority and establishment of support features.” The fifth factor is the perceptions on the international student system, which aims to assess if Korean students regard current policies for international students to be discriminative or preferential. Sub-items include “equal treatment in scholarship-related policies between international and Korean students,” “equal treatment in dormitory acceptance-related criteria between international and Korean students,” and “equal treatment in grade processing between international and Korean students.” Reliability testing indicated Cronbach’s α value of .64 for “perceptions on the international student system,” while all other factors had Cronbach’s α values of .7. The survey also included one item to measure the extent of the respondents’ desire to expand exchanges with international students.

Table 4. Reliability and Validity Verification Results of the Survey Tool

Category	Element 1	Element 2	Element 3	Element 4	Element 5
	Contact experience: Level of exchange with	Multicultural competency	Classroom victimization	Contact situation	Perception of the international student system

	foreigner				
Exchange level with international students	.81				
Participation in clubs	.79				
Foreigner friends	.74				
Participation in class	.67				
Overseas visits	.47				
Expanded experience of other cultures		.77			
Enhanced global mentality		.76			
Improved language proficiency		.71			
Reduced foreigner aversion		.50			
Decline in class quality			.76		
Extended time for explanations			.74		
Psychological burden about class			.65		
Disadvantages in group work			.59		
Separate classes for international students			.55		
Support, Assistance				.82	
Cooperative environment				.81	
Common goal				.68	
Equal				.66	

environment					
Application of same criteria for scholarships					.83
Application of same criteria for grades					.71
Application of same criteria for dormitories					.66
eigen value	4.47	2.71	2.09	1.80	1.03
%	21.27	12.91	9.96	8.59	4.92
Cumulative %	21.3	34.2	44.1	52.7	64.3
Cronbach's α	.76	.77	.70	.78	.64

4.3 Analysis of Correlation between Variables

The results of extracting correlation coefficients among key variables applied as independent and dependent variables in the regression model are presented in Table 5. Statistically significant correlations were found between the variables of expectations of enhancement in levels of exchange with foreigners and enhancement of multicultural competency as well as perceptions on contact situation and expectations of enhancement of multicultural competency. These variables showed statistically significant positive correlations, with absolute correlation coefficients of .35 and .41, respectively, indicating a relatively strong relationship. Correlation is not causation. Therefore, it cannot be interpreted that higher levels of exchange with international students and higher perceptions of contact situations mean higher perceptions and expectations regarding multicultural competency enhancement. However, in general, a positive perception of contact experiences and situations is associated with higher perceptions and expectations regarding multicultural competency enhancement. Analysis of the correlation between classroom victimization, which is the Korean students' perceptions of disadvantages when taking classes with international students, and other variables shows that there is a statistically significant correlation with the variables of the level of exchanges with foreigners, perceptions of contact situations, expectations of multicultural competency enhancement, and perceptions on the international student system. Classroom victimization has a statistically significant negative correlation with the level of exchanges with foreigners, perceptions of contact situations, and expectations of multicultural competency enhancement. The absolute values of these correlation coefficients are .17 .2, .27 .16, respectively. Although no statistically significant results were found with the willingness to expand exchanges, it exhibited a negative correlation. Therefore, classroom victimization is likely to have a negative correlation with all variables included in the regression model. This demonstrates that negative perceptions regarding taking classes with international students may consistently influence other related variables, highlighting the importance of preventing and resolving potential conflicts between international and Korean students within the academic setting. Lastly, the willingness to expand exchanges exhibits a statistically significant correlation with the level of exchanges with foreigners and the expectations of multicultural competency enhancement. This willingness demonstrated positive correlations with the level of exchanges with foreigners and expectations of multicultural competency enhancement, with absolute correlation coefficients of .21 and .46, respectively. In particular, there is a high correlation between expectations of multicultural competency enhancement and willingness to expand exchanges. These results imply that contact with foreigners may positively contribute to multicultural competency enhancement, and possibly lead to the creation of a willingness to expand exchanges, which predicted such contribution. Also, the possibility of enhancement of multicultural competency may be higher with a higher willingness to expand exchanges.

Table 5. Results of Correlation Analysis between Major Variables

Category	Level of exchange with foreigner	Perception of contact situation	Expectation of enhanced multicultural competency	International student system	Classroom victimization	Will to expand exchanges
Level of exchange with foreigner	-					
Perception of contact situation	0.049	-				
Expectation of enhanced multicultural competency	.351**	.406**	-			
International student system	-0.056	0.061	-0.036			
Classroom victimization	-0.168*	-.203*	-0.268***	-.164*	-	
Will to expand exchanges	.207*	0.058	.464**	-0.034	-0.024	-

‘*’: p < .05, ‘**’: p < .01, ‘***’: p < .001

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis Results

The results of the multiple regression analysis for each model as presented in Table 1 are shown in Table 6 and Table 7. The regression models that incorporated the academic year and department affiliation were both identified to have statistically significant influence, as control variables. To evaluate the goodness of fit, the models' explanatory powers R² and F-test results are presented. Also, the size of the influence of variables was compared by presenting the standardized estimates of the impact of independent variables. Multicollinearity verification results of Model 1 in Table 5 showed VIF values of 1.03~1.47, and tolerance values larger than 0.1, which demonstrates that there are no issues with multicollinearity.

The analysis of Model 1 showed that the level of exchange with foreigners has a statistically significant impact on “multicultural competency” and “classroom victimization,” while it has an insignificant impact on “contact situation.” Therefore, it was found that a higher level of contact with foreigners and international students is associated with a more positive perception of international students. “Multicultural competency” has an impact of .33 while “classroom victimization” has an impact of -.22. This suggests that individuals with more experiences with foreigners and international students and foreign cultures perceive that those exchanges with international students and common learning have positive influences on their multicultural competency.

Table 6. Analysis Result of Regression Analysis Model 1

Category	Model 1				
	Perception of contact situation	Multicultural competency	Classroom victimization	International student system	Will to expand exchanges
intercept	3.78***	3.78***	2.12***	2.89***	4.07***
Year 2-1	-.30	-.21	.90***	.04	-.01

	3-1	-.10	-.11	.38	.17	.13
	4-1	.054	-.28	.48	.03	.28
Academic discipline	Engineering-Humanities	-.53**	-.46**	.10	.08	-.03
	Arts and Physical Education-Humanities	-.48	-.35	.24	.31	-.38
	Others-Humanities	-.39	-.19	.81*	.34	-.03
Level of exchange with foreigner	.03	.33***	-.22**	-.04**	.17*	
Model adequacy	R ² =.10, F= 2.32**	R ² =.17, F= 4.49***	R ² =.15, F= 3.82***	R ² =.02, F= .39	R ² =.06, F= 1.46	

‘*’: p < .05, ‘**’: p < .01, ‘***’: p < .001

In Model 2, the impact of contact effects and perception of contact situations on the perceptions of Korean students toward international students were analyzed. It was found that, first, “level of exchange with foreigners,” “equality of contact situation,” and “common goals of contact situation” have a statistically significant impact on “strengthening multicultural competency.” The standardized beta values were 0.32, 0.19, and 0.27, respectively. Higher contact experience, higher perception of interdependence between international and Korean students to achieve a common goal, and higher perception of opposition to hierarchical and unequal relationships forming between the two groups showed a more positive perception of multicultural competency enhancement through international students. Second, the statistically significant impact on “classroom victimization” was found to be “level of exchange with foreigners” at -.20, and the contact situation factor of “support and assistance” with .20. This indicates that as the level of contact experience increases, the perception of being disrupted in academic activities due to international students decreases. The higher the perception that the overall university environment and policies support and assist Korean students’ contact and exchange with international students, the higher the negative perception toward taking classes with international students. Regarding this finding, an in-depth study will be needed in the future. Third, “common goals” of the perceptions of contact situations has a statistically significant impact of .27 on “perceptions of the international student system.” This suggests that as the perception of high interdependence to achieve common goals increases, the more they see that equal policies regarding scholarships, dormitories, and grade processing must be applied to both groups. Fourth, “level of exchange with foreigners” and “support and assistance,” at .16 and -.28, respectively, have a statistically significant impact on the will to expand exchanges with international students. This indicates that a higher level of contact experience is associated with a greater willingness to expand future exchanges, but a higher perception that the overall university environment and policies support and assist Korean students’ contact and exchange with international students is associated with a lower willingness to expand exchanges. This finding is different from the prediction that a high positive perception of support and assistance for exchanges in general will have a positive relationship with willingness to expand exchanges. Regarding this finding, an in-depth study will be needed in the future.

Model 3 analyzes the variables that affect Korean students' willingness to enhance exchanges and contact with international students, taking into consideration that expanding exchanges and contact is a means of resolving conflicts between international and Korean students. It was found that the statistically significant variable was “multicultural competence” with .46. This means that Korean students hope to enhance their linguistic abilities, global mindset, and multicultural sensitivity through increased exchanges with international students, and the more they believe that they reap such actual benefits, the more proactive they are in exchanges with international students and the higher their positive perception on the existence of international students.

Table 7. Analysis Results of Regression Analysis Models 2 and 3

Category		Model 2				Model 3
		Multicultural competency	Classroom victimization	International student system	Will to expand exchanges	Will to expand exchanges
intercept		2.42***	2.70***	2.52***	3.84***	3.01
Year	2-1	-.09	.81**	.12	.03	.16
	3-1	-.04	.34	.28	.13	.20
	4-1	-.04	.32	.14	.37	.43
Academic discipline	Engineering-Humanities	-.26	.00	.16	-.05	.08
	Arts and Physical Education-Humanities	-.13	.12	.33	-.31	-.23
	Others-Humanities	-.05	.75*	.33	-.01	.11
Level of exchange with foreigner		.32***	-.20**	-.04	.16*	-.01
Perception of contact situation	Equality	.19**	-.07	-.14	.06	-.04
	Cooperation	.11	-.18	-.01	.13	.06
	Common goal	.27**	-.16	.27*	.15	.01
	Support, Assistance	-.09	.20*	-.03	-.28**	-.21*
Multicultural competency		-	-	-	-	.46***
Classroom victimization		-	-	-	-	-.12
International student system		-	-	-	-	-.03
Model adequacy		R ² =.32, F= 6.47***	R ² =.22, F= 3.87***	R ² =.08, F= 1.13	R ² =.12, F= 1.90*	R ² =.30, F= 4.41***

** : p < .05, *** : p < .01, **** : p < .001

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study analyzed the influence of contact effects and contact situation factors on the perceptions of Korean students toward international students. The study findings are as follows.

First, the contact experiences of Korean students with foreigners, foreign cultures, and international students positively impacted their perceptions of international students, leading to positive influence for positive perceptions and negative influence for negative perceptions, demonstrating contact effect on Korean students' perceptions of international students. Those with higher contact experience anticipate an enhancement in their multicultural competency and express a greater willingness to expand exchanges with international students. On the other hand, their perception of classroom victimization due to international students decreases. It was also found that they are likely to agree with

discriminatory policies that favorably treat international students. However, the positive impact of such discriminatory policies was relatively small. Such contact effect does not have a significant impact on contact situation factors, so the expansion of contact experience does not translate into the creation of positive contact situation factors. Therefore, to reduce conflicts between international and Korean students, universities should focus on broadening contact experiences and, simultaneously, conduct additional and separate reviews of contact situation factors and establish measures. As suggested by previous studies, expanding contact experiences does not necessarily lead to a reduction in intergroup conflicts and the quality of contact is more important than the quantity of contact. These studies confirm that proactive considerations of contact situation factors are needed.

Second, in the regression model that set “level of exchange with foreigners” and “contact situations” as independent variables, “level of exchange with foreigners” was found to not be statistically significant on the “international student system.” These results caution against hastily interpreting the impact of contact experiences, such as the level of exchange with foreigners, to be positive on the perception of Korean students regarding considerate and discriminatory policies towards international students. It is essential to exercise caution in interpreting reactions to considerate and discriminatory policies uniformly. In other words, opposing discriminatory policies does not necessarily imply a lack of consideration of or positive perception of international students. Analyzing responses to open-ended questions revealed that some students considered applying the same standards to such things as scholarships, dormitory admission, and grading to international students as Korean students as an elimination of discrimination towards international students. In short, those who perceive the international student system to be unfavorable compared to the system for Korean students saw that the application of equal standards for international students was actually considerate. Therefore, a careful approach is required when interpreting the equal application of standards for international students as negative emotions or perceptions that do not acknowledge the considerate discrimination for international students.

Third, among the contact situation factors, “equality” was found to have a positive impact on “multicultural competency.” Therefore, the conscious or subconscious feelings of superiority or inferiority of Korean students based on national culture or race result in an opposite effect of equality, one of the contact situation factors in this study. This also results in a negative impact on the supposed positive effect of contact with international students on the enhancement of multicultural competence. Universities need to establish institutional mechanisms and support systems to expand contact between Korean and international students while fostering an atmosphere of equality within the university culture so as not to give birth to feelings of superiority or inferiority between the two groups of students. Particularly, feelings of superiority that Korean students may have toward international students from Southeast Asia or other regions could be rooted in a collective attribute based on the higher international status of Korea compared to these nations. Therefore, efforts should be directed toward improving institutional policies and creating a learning community that ensures unbiased interactions with international students. Achieving a perception of equality for both international and Korean students necessitates the absence of administrative and institutional discrimination, along with the creation of an environment and culture fostering mutual acknowledgment of intentional discrimination within recognized limits.

Fourth, among the contact situation factors, “common goals” positively influence “multicultural competency.” Common goals signify shared objectives and the recognition of mutual dependence between international students and Korean students. When there is mutual dependence and shared common goals, the cultural differences between the two groups of students become secondary, and respect for each other’s cultures can be cultivated. Differences arising within the community that shares common goals are only a subset of the larger context and situation, and therefore do not lead to issues of exclusion. As such mutual dependence has a positive effect on the enhancement of the multicultural competency of Korean students, universities need to elevate awareness of mutual dependence between international and Korean students so that international students are not perceived as outsiders. Also, universities should expand institutional operation and promotion to encourage and help the two groups of students share common goals and recognize mutual dependence. It is crucial to highlight the positive aspects of financial gains and increased investment for universities resulting from attracting international students, rather than the disadvantages the Korean students get from distributing limited educational resources to the international students, and the universities must endeavor to achieve these benefits. Regarding this, there should be various approaches to the university’s future academic operations, especially student evaluations. In the open-ended questions, students expressed a sense of burden and aversion towards group activities or teamwork with international students, as well as the resulting outcomes, including grading. Therefore, it is necessary to review and improve institutional provisions and teaching methods related to evaluating activities such as group work, with a focus on setting valid and fair criteria. Also, exploring alternatives like expanding pass-fail grading for certain activities within classes or during the entire class could be considered. The

grading system based on a curve may act as a deterrent for international students to participate in classes with Korean students, while Korean students may perceive classes with minimal international student involvement as conducive to achieving higher grades. Efficient and effective academic operation systems addressing these aspects must be reviewed. Both Korean and international students should regard each other as members of a community who will help their academic performance and growth and as a peer, contributing to positive outcomes of collaborative learning, rather than as competitors acquiring limited resources within the university through mutual competition.

Fifth, among the contact situation factors, “common goals” has a positive impact on the creation of the perception that international student policies should be operated on the same standards as policies for Korean students. A higher perception of mutual dependency with international students lead to the opinion that policies must be applied equally. Analyzing responses to open-ended questions reveals conflicting opinions, with some advocating for equal application of standards to avoid discrimination against international students and others arguing that no discriminatory consideration is necessary for mutually dependent members. Although rooted in different reasons, the different systems and regulations for international students and Korean students foster a perception of heterogeneity rather than homogeneity for both groups. It is also necessary to continuously review the future outcomes of minimizing separate regulations for international students, such as for grade processing, scholarships, dormitories, etc., especially if the number of international students continues to increase.

Sixth, among the contact situation factors, “support and assistance” has a positive impact on “classroom victimization” but a negative impact on “willingness to expand exchanges.” While contact situation factors generally reinforce positive perceptions and mitigate negative perceptions toward international students, it is the opposite for “support and assistance.” Institutional support from the universities implies the abolition of authority to regulate contact and the establishment of regulatory mechanisms for positive contact. If such efforts on the university level heighten Korean students' “classroom victimization” and negatively affect their will to expand exchange with international students, it may be best to reduce “support and assistance” and reach the conclusion that considerations for contact situations may be inappropriate. To delve deeper into these findings, an analysis of open-ended responses from students with high perceptions of “support and assistance” as well as of “classroom victimization” showed that they tended to perceive “classroom victimization” as a hindrance to cooperative exchanges with international students rather than as a disadvantageous issue. In other words, those with a higher perception of “support and assistance” tended to regard “classroom victimization” strongly as an area that needs improvement rather than as a problem. Moreover, those with a higher perception on “support and assistance” were already actively interacting with international students and recognizing achievements, which explains the relatively low willingness to expand exchanges. Universities must seek specific institutional measures for “support and assistance” in the future, which requires detailed surveys or in-depth interviews.

The significance and future directions of this study are as follows. First, this study empirically verified that contact situation factors that affect Korean students' perceptions of international students, providing implications for future university and government policies and institutional improvements. Second, to conduct a more comprehensive analysis, it is necessary to develop additional valid sub-items for each detailed sub-factor of contact situation factors. Additional hypotheses and verification are required to determine whether contact situation factors act as causes, mediators, or moderators in the relationships suggested by previous studies. In the hypothesis that the qualitative aspect of contact is more critical than the quantitative aspect, there is a need to verify the mediating or moderating effects of contact situation factors. Third, the validity of measurement tools for assessing Korean students' perceptions of international students needs to be assessed. In particular, the measurement items related to institutional discrimination against international students require modification and improvement. Fourth, generalizing the results should be done cautiously due to the limited characteristics of the survey respondents. Future studies should consider expanding the sample to include diverse characteristics such as gender, region, and university type.

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