



## An examination of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study aims to introduce and characterize Koreans residing in the Dominican Republic and record salient features of their daily lives.

**Methodology:** This paper uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, including surveys completed by 108 adults of Korean ancestry, interviews with prominent members of the Korean community, and first-hand observation, to chronicle the lives and economic activities of Koreans in the Dominican Republic.

**Findings:** According to the survey findings, Koreans in the Dominican Republic interact primarily through their churches and families. Although acculturation appears to be taking place among the young who have shown an interest in Dominican cuisine, dance, and music, the average Korean spends little time interacting with people outside their immediate social circles. Crime, government corruption, and cultural differences between Korean employers and Dominican workers are the most pressing issues for Koreans in the Dominican Republic.

**Novelty/Implications:** Despite their contributions, little is known about how Koreans living in the Dominican Republic adapt to their new environment, how they go about their daily lives, and what challenges they face. The community of roughly 700 Koreans living in the Dominican Republic is being studied for the first time in this paper.

*Keywords:* Korean Community, Diaspora, Adaptation, Dominican Republic

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### INTRODUCTION

The island of Hispaniola is shared by the Republic of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Like many other developing nations, it heavily depends on foreign investment to create employment opportunities for its citizens. The United States and Europe dominated foreign investment in the Dominican Republic for many decades, but more recently, the government of the Dominican Republic has been actively courting investors from emerging economic powers like South Korea (Rodriguez 2005). Those advising the Dominican Republic's economy kept an eye on the potential for expansion and investment from Korea. On August 16, 2012, Danilo Medina was sworn in as President of the Dominican Republic. He committed to improving the country and drawing in new foreign investment. As a result, the President of the Dominican Republic ordered Dominican diplomats to Dominican market goods abroad, host tourists, and entice international investors to set up shop in the country. As part of this shift in foreign policy, it was crucial to assess the networks of ex-pat entrepreneurs in the Dominican Republic to persuade their friends and family to set up shop there.

More than 20 factories that specialize in light manufacturing, apparel, and chemicals have been run by Korean businesspeople in the Dominican Republic since the early 1990s, taking advantage of the country's relatively low labor costs and its strategic location as a stepping stone for exports to the North American markets.

The Dominican Republic and Korea established diplomatic relations on June 6, 1962, more than fifty years ago. In addition to mentioning the historic visit of the first Dominican head of state to Korea in 2006, Korean Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Park Dong-Sil emphasized the exponential growth in bilateral trade, which reached \$250 million in 2016. (Bolinaga 2011). Koreans living in the Dominican Republic still face substantial challenges, including a corrupt government and a weak judiciary, despite undeniable progress in relations between the two countries. After a string of kidnappings and murders against Koreans living in the Dominican Republic have

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terrified many in the Korean community in recent years, crime and safety have become major concerns (Carrasco 2012).

The primary objective of this research is to better comprehend the dynamics of the Korean community's adaptation process by gaining insight into the daily lives of its members in the Dominican Republic. Based on responses to questionnaires given to members of the Korean community, this paper will also examine the characteristics of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. This article aims to provide information that may be useful to policymakers in the Dominican Republic so that they can implement the policy to improve the lives and business prospects of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic and thereby increase the country's attractiveness to foreign investment.

Although diplomatic relations between the Dominican Republic and Korea were established on June 6, 1962, in the early 1980s, Koreans started moving there in large numbers. Alternatively, other Latin American countries have a much longer history of Koreans living there. A brief history of Korean immigration to Latin America will be discussed to place the process of Korean immigration in a broader context. Waves of Korean migration occurred all over the world for the majority of the twentieth century, beginning as early as 1903 when Mexican President Porfirio Diaz invited Korean farmers to work and populate the lands of the vast Mexican territory (Hyon, 1976). Ten hundred thirty-three Korean adults and children set sail from Incheon for Western Mexico and then to Yucatan, where they spent most of their time working in henequen plantations (Canal Once 2012). The next influx of Korean immigrants sailed for South America. By purchasing land and promoting the migration of entire families to farm the sparsely populated countrysides of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, the Korean government encouraged emigration to South America under the Immigration Law of 1962. However, most of these new arrivals came from middle-class households and were not raised on farms. Almost all new arrivals left rural areas behind and settled in urban centers. The 1990s saw a decline in Korean immigration to Latin America, which then served as a transit zone for Koreans headed for the United States (Kim 2001). Today, significant communities of Koreans in Latin America are descended from these early emigrants. In Brazil, there are around 50,000 Koreans. In Argentina, there are around 22,000, and in Mexico, there are around 19,000.

The Caribbean Basin Initiative had a direct impact on Korean immigration to the Dominican Republic (CBI). U.S. policymakers implemented the CBI in response to decades of conflict in Latin America fueled by tensions arising during the cold war. To stop the spread of Sandinista-style guerrillas, the Caribbean Basin Recovery Act of 1983 provided tariff and trade preferences to countries in Central America and the Caribbean that were not part of the socialist bloc. A small number of Korean textile and light manufacturing firms relocated to the Dominican Republic due to this new political development (Pregelj 2003). The Dominican government incentivized Korean businesspeople to shop there, such as eliminating tariffs on machinery imports.

All the goods made in these Korean-owned factories were stamped with the phrase "Made in the Dominican Republic," allowing them to be exported to the United States duty-free.

For Korean textile producers, the Dominican Republic served as a strategic stepping stone because it was only 1,000 miles from the United States. Even more Korean businessmen are drawn to the Dominican Republic by the significant reduction in shipping times and costs. A key factor was that, in contrast to the troublesome business climate in Korea, the Dominican labor force was inexpensive and not unionized in the early 1980s. Unions organizing Korean workers have regularly called for strikes to improve working conditions and wages. The early 2000s were also a prosperous time for Korean manufacturers in the Dominican Republic. More Korean exporters flocked to the Dominican Republic after the peso lost half its value against the dollar during the country's financial crisis and bank run in 2004. At its peak, the number of Koreans living in the country surpassed 1,000. Korean industrialists saw their profits decline as the new Dominican government bowed to worker demands for higher pay.

Additionally, the Central Bank of the Dominican Republic implemented contractionary monetary policies, which caused the Dominican Peso to rise in value. The Dominican Peso almost completely made up the ground it lost against the U.S. dollar during the crisis by the end of 2005. In this paper, we use the following example from a Korean business leader in the Dominican Republic to illustrate this point: "I could buy a pack of cigarettes and a six-pack of beer with a single dollar when I first arrived in the Dominican Republic in 2004, but after the country's currency reform and revaluation, I was unable to do so. Dollar depreciation of around 50% against the Dominican

peso led to higher wages, which drove out Korean factories that same year". At least ten Korean-run factories have closed, and their employees have relocated abroad.

There has been a general downward trend in the cost of labor throughout the world, making places like Vietnam, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and even neighboring Haiti more appealing. In 2005, for instance, a worker in the Dominican Republic typically asked for \$250 more per month than their Bangladeshi counterparts. Companies from Korea left the Dominican Republic for various reasons, including that they had planned their budgets too far in advance and assumed stable labor costs. As a result, their profits took a hit due to the unexpected rise in operational costs. Seeing their profits decline in an increasingly competitive and oversaturated textile manufacturing industry, some Koreans began importing Korean-made goods to resell abroad. Others sought distribution rights to sell Korean products in the Dominican Republic and neighboring countries. Dozens of Korean businessmen now sell everything from boxes to ink to automatic trash cans to spare parts for power plants. These Koreans decided to keep operating in the Dominican Republic even after the collapse of the textile industry, thereby diversifying into other fields. They settled there permanently, becoming the focus of this paper as the Korean immigrant community.

The Dominican Republic is home to about 700 Koreans, mostly businessmen or religious missionaries. One of the newest immigrant communities in the Dominican Republic is the Korean diaspora, which has only been around for a few decades. Haitians, Spaniards, Americans, Chinese, Lebanese, Syrians, and Jews arrived in the Dominican Republic at different times, but they all played significant roles in the country's development.

Table 1: Foreign residents in the Dominican Republic

Country	Population
Haiti	458,233
Puerto Rico	4,416
Cuba	3,145
United States	13,154
Other North America	3,597
All Central America	2,293
Venezuela	3,434
Colombia	2,738
Other South America	3,839
China	3,643
Other Asia	3,589
Spain	6,720
Italy	4,044
France	3,599
Germany	1,792
Other Europe	4,125
Other rest world	1,912

Source: Dominican National Statistics Institute (2011)

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of Korean communities around the world has been of particular importance to academics of Korean origin living overseas. In the beginning, these studies focused mainly on researching communities in countries with large Korean populations such as China, Japan, and the United States. Hyon (1976) presented an interesting study that followed waves of Korean immigration through the last two centuries. Other authors such as Park (2006) presented an extensive study of the history of Korean communities in the United States. Similar studies were conducted on Korean Diasporas in countries like Australia, the Philippines, and countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union.

Some of our references focus on the experiences of Koreans who migrated to specific urban areas or specific geographical spots within countries. For example Min (1999) focused specifically on the challenges facing Korean entrepreneurs in New York City. Other studies narrow their scope to the point of researching only on specific

occupations such as Korean laundry and trade businesses of people in the city of Los Angeles. Scholars who research on Korean communities in Latin America have begun to emerge as new generations of Korean descendants while second and third generations became interested in documenting their histories and studying their communities. Bialogorski (2008) published an interesting account of the Korean migrant experience in the city of Buenos Aires that very much served as one of the bases for this study (Mera 2000). Similarly, Kim (2001) presented a study that traced Korean immigration to Mexico as far back as the early 20th century. It is worth noticing that the study of Korean communities in Latin American countries has started to diverge from the purely historical to cover also sociological aspects of the members of the Korean communities in some Latin American countries. Take for example Im et al. (2009), in which the author conducts questionnaires and interviews targeting young second generation Koreans in Brazil in an effort to capture the lives and challenges of new Korean-Brazilians. This paper follows upon the work of other authors who have already done research on Korean communities in various Latin American countries and intends to put together a comprehensive report on the lives and times of Koreans living in the Dominican Republic.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For the conduction of this study, a total of 108 Korean adults residing in the Dominican Republic were given a questionnaire sheet to fill. The field work took place in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic during the month of December, 2016.

The type of survey administered was group administered questionnaire. In this kind of survey, a sample of respondents is brought together and asked to respond to a structured sequence of questions. Traditionally, these kinds of questionnaires are administered in group settings for convenience. For this study, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to those who were present to be fairly sure that there would be a high response rate. If the respondents were unclear about the meaning of a question, they could ask for clarification. And, there were often organizational settings where it was relatively easy to assemble the group, for example, visits to churches, Korean companies, and homes.

The questionnaire consisted of 14 questions divided into 4 different sections. The first section dealt with demographic characteristics that included income, age, time living in the Dominican Republic and purpose of stay. The second section investigates the acculturation of members of the Korean community by asking them about their Spanish language proficiency and which aspects of Dominican culture they like. A fourth part focuses on crime and how Koreans feel about safety and the rule of law in the Dominican Republic. The final section is oriented to Korean business owners and how they assess the work and behavior of their Dominican employees. All answers were compiled in easy to read bar graphs that allow the reader to see clearly how Koreans living in the Dominican Republic feel about important issues.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this study, the Dominican minimum wage as of 2016 wage was used as a standard for the level of income. In the DR, the minimum wage is about 254 dollars per month working full time. An income of between 10,000 and 20,000 dollars a month in the Dominican Republic enables that household to afford an extremely accommodated lifestyle. That is because price level and the price of non-tradable services are much lower in the DR than that in Korea or the United States. 16 out of 108 (14.81%) respondents said that their household has an income of about 1270 dollars a month, that is about 5 times Dominican wage and enough for a family of 4 to enjoy an adequate standard of living. 40 persons or a 37.04% said their families have an income of between 1271 and 12,710 dollars a month that is between 5 to 10 Dominican minimum wages a month and enables a family to afford a good living in the Dominican Republic. 18.52% of respondents said that they enjoy a family income of between 12,711 and 20,000 dollars a month. The remaining 29.63% or 32 people out of 108 enjoy a household income of more than 20,000 a month. 86% of Korean households earn wages that are unimaginable for most Dominican families. Actually, 29.63 of Korean families earn more than 20,000 American dollars a month which is a fortune in the Dominican Republic and allows a lavish quality of life.

Unlike the first and second waves of Koreans who arrived in Latin America in the early 20th century escaping the crushing poverty in the homeland, Koreans who moved to the Dominican Republic in the early 1980s had middle-class backgrounds and skills in manufacturing (Mera 2009). More importantly, the first Koreans to arrive in the Dominican Republic had the capital to invest and unwavering support from the Dominican government to open businesses. Early Korean immigrants were almost entirely male technicians with factory work experience moving alone to the Dominican Republic. In typical Korean fashion, these men would eventually bring their families, and very often acquaintances and relatives would follow in the journey to the Dominican Republic. It was particularly the case during the years following the Korean crisis of 1998.

Table 2: Foreign residents in the Dominican Republic

Year	2005	2015	2016
Population	*1000	486	695

Note. Estimations provided by the Korean Embassy in the Dominican Republic. Koreans living in the Dominican Republic often do not report their residence to the Korean embassy as a way to prevent other Koreans from starting similar businesses and turning into potential competitors.

\* Estimation provided by Korean business leaders interviewed for this paper.

Koreans in the Dominican Republic maintain close ties with their families and traditions and seldom socialize with local Dominicans outside the working place. Koreans send their children to elite bilingual schools that charge tuitions of about 600 dollars a month putting them out of the reach of the majority of Dominicans. There are two Korean schools in the Dominican Republic, one in each of the two major cities, Santo Domingo and Santiago (Bosch 1971). These schools run after school programs in Korean writing, reading, traditional Korean art and craft-making and cooking that aim at maintaining and strengthening bonds with the motherland. Koreans congregate every Sunday in self-run protestant churches. The churches have become the most important institutions for the formation of Korean social capital in the Dominican Republic. Koreans living in the Dominican Republic express their interest in cuisine, music, traditional Dominican dances such as bachata and merengue and tourism.

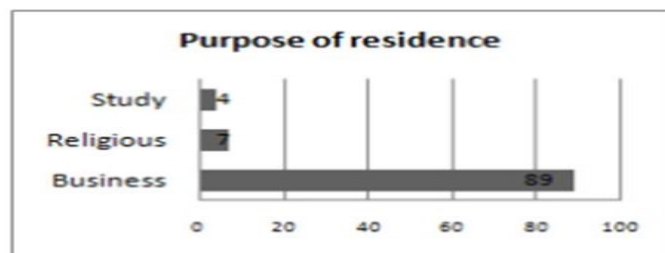


Figure 1. Purpose of residence in DR as a percentage of respondents

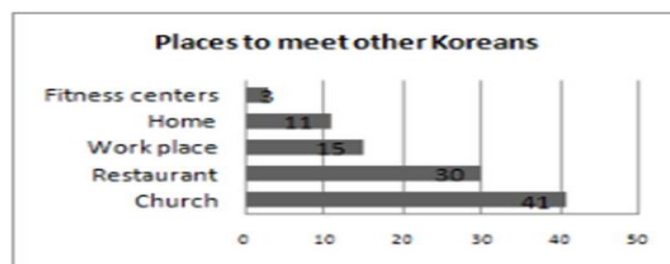


Figure 2. Places to meet other Koreans as a percentage of respondents

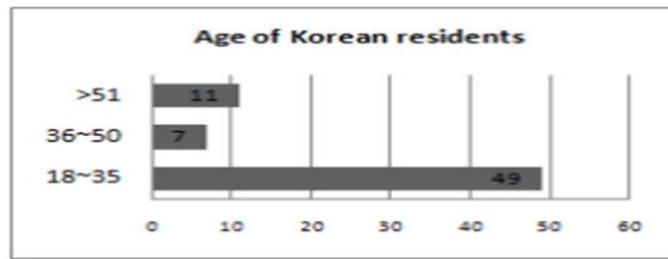


Figure 3. Age of Koreans in DR as a percentage of respondents

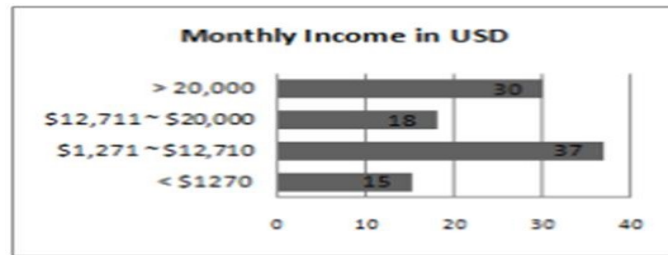


Figure 4. Monthly income of Koreans in DR as a percentage of respondents

Members of the Korean community cited the language barrier as the main limitation to acculturation with over 70% of respondents to the survey grading their Spanish proficiency as no more than intermediate. Koreans tend to retain the Korean language as the primary form of communication while living in the host country. Moreover, the culture of isolationism and lack of interaction with locals make it hard for Koreans to learn Spanish naturally. Korean parents in the Dominican Republic regard English language education and Korean language reinforcements as more important than learning Spanish which explains the overwhelming enrollment of Korean children in pricey bilingual schools and the weekly lessons on Korean reading and writing. Korean families showed no intention of sending their children to Dominican universities choosing instead to groom them for higher studies in American or Korean colleges. Koreans in the Dominican Republic are fond of traditions such as cuisine, religion, and child rearing. Interviewees for this paper reported that Koreans in the Dominican Republic order most of their food from Korean markets in the US or directly from Korea. The Dominican Republic has a pluralistic ethnic and cultural composition, and its population exhibits an almost perfect “mestizaje”, a melting pot of European, African, and indigenous peoples. On the other hand, Korea has one of the most homogeneous societies in the world with a history that dates back over 5000 years.

Members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic have reacted to the Dominican unusual social and cultural makeup by remaining somewhat isolated. As a result, they tend to face more difficulties of adaptation, integration, and acculturation. The bright spot in the acculturation process of Koreans to the Dominican Republic is their new found love for Dominican food. Local cuisine was reported as the favorite aspect of the Dominican culture. As has been observed in other countries such as the United States (Choi, 2002) Koreans in the Dominican Republic are inclined to entrepreneurial ventures and seldom look for employment at local companies.

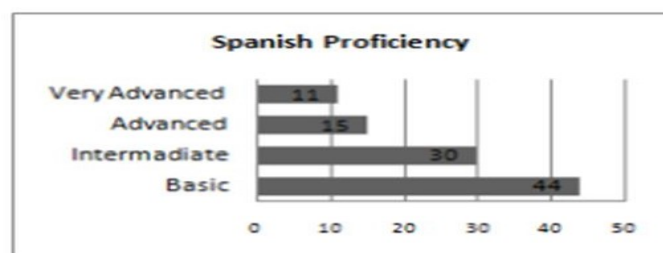


Figure 5. Spanish proficiency of Koreans as a percentage of respondents



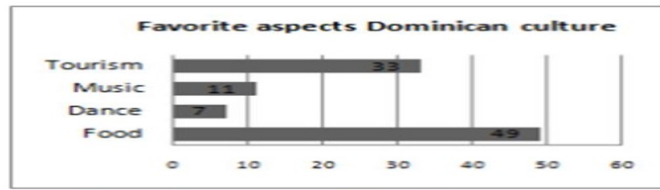


Figure 6. Favorite aspects of DR culture as a percentage of respondents

High crime rates and the associated sense of insecurity are the biggest concerns for Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. There have been cases of murders, kidnappings, and armed robbery involving Korean victims. In 2012, a Korean businessman was found dead after being kidnapped by two former employees. The tardiness in the investigations and the lack of an official resolution of the case further weakened Korean trust in the Dominican law and order bodies. Newspapers have reported incidents involving Korean citizens (Castillo 2013) that further strengthen the feelings of insecurity Koreans have while living in the Dominican Republic.

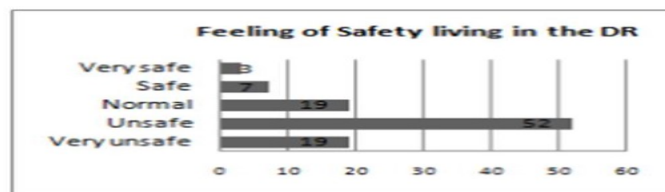


Figure 7. Feeling of safety in streets as a percentage of respondents

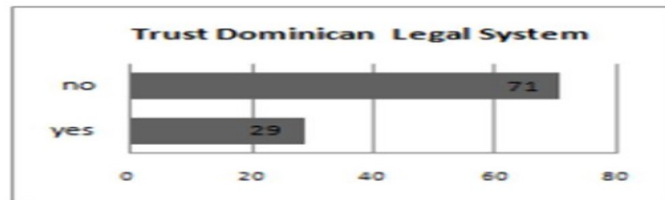


Figure 8. Do you trust DR legal system? as a percentage of respondents

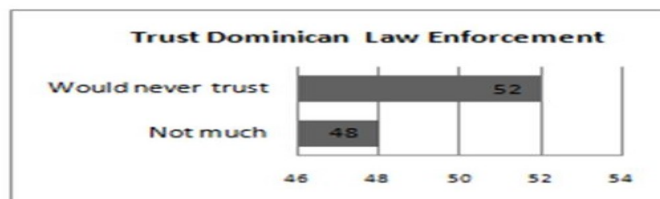


Figure 9. How much trust in police? as a percentage of respondents

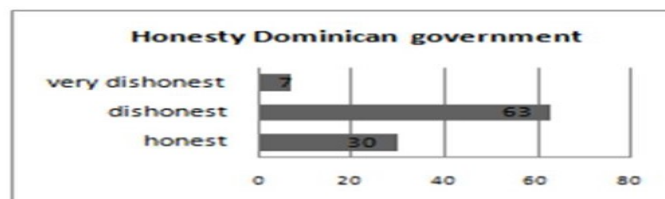


Figure 10. Honesty in DR government as a percentage of respondents

Crime and lack of safety are some of the biggest concerns for Koreans living in the Dominican Republic. Koreans reported feeling afraid walking in the streets of the Dominican Republic. 56 respondents said that they feel quite unsafe while walking in Dominican streets accounting for 51.85%. 20 people said that they feel very unsafe and it accounts for an 18.5%. It is important to point out that the cumulative percentage of those who feel “very unsafe” and “quite unsafe” is 70.4% corroborating what Koreans say about their feeling of insecurity in the Dominican Republic triggered by the acts of crime perpetuated against Koreans in the last few years. The results show that Koreans of second generation are more fond of Dominican cultural aspects such as dance and food. This is consistent with similar studies of second-generation Koreans in Latin America (Im et al. 2009).

It is going to be hard for Koreans to recommend their partners to move, visit or live as businesspeople in the Dominican Republic when more than 60% of Koreans feel unsafe walking in the streets. Koreans still feel terrified since the kidnappings and assassinations of Korean business leaders.

Members of foreign communities, chambers of commerce, and foreign investors interviewed for this paper complained about the lack of trust they have in the Dominican legal system. After surveying 108 persons about how much they trust the Dominican legal system, 32 individuals said that they trusted the judiciary accounting for a 29.63% while 76 people said that they distrust the system (70.37%). Dominican Republic faces major challenges in order to improve its law abiding and rule of law credentials. Transparency International already rates the Dominican Republic 118 out of 174 countries in its transparency index. Koreans said overwhelmingly that Dominicans have a weak judiciary plagued with corruption. I have endeavored to find to which extent Koreans living in the Dominican Republic trust law enforcement officers (police officers) in the Dominican Republic. When asked about how much they trust Dominican police officers, no respondent believed that police officers in the Dominican Republic were trustworthy. 52 respondents out of 108 said that police officers were not so trustworthy, accounting for a 48.15 percent.

Other 56 respondents or a 51.85% said that they would never trust Dominican police officers. In conclusion, Koreans have negative image of Dominican law enforcement largely influenced by cases in which Koreans were kidnapped in the DR and investigators were unable to solve the cases. Koreans participating in this study confessed they had acquired fire arms for self-protection; a stark contrast with Korean culture where civilians never carry fire arms. The survey results similarly show that Koreans regard Dominican government officials as corrupted. 63% of respondents said that Dominican government workers were dishonest.

Korean business leaders expressed their frustration in dealing with Dominican employees, in particular, factory workers. Korean managers are well-accustomed to a rigid, top-down almost militaristic style of management where bosses are widely respected and their decisions never challenged. Dominican laborers, however, perform better under more horizontal structures where managers and laborers have basically a friend-friend kind of relationship. Titles, age, and seniority do not necessarily imply differences in the way a person is addressed or treated. Korean employers, in their frustration for not being able to convey their orders in understandable Spanish, often raise their voices in an authoritarian manner. In the Dominican Republic, scolding someone can be highly offensive. Korean business leaders complained about the low educational attainment of Dominican white collar workers. A Korean business owner described how when being asked to read and sign their labor contracts some workers were not able to do either and routinely signed a letter X due to their inability to write their names. Korean business leaders complain about the inadequacy and express dissatisfaction for the quality of the Dominican labor force. When surveyed for this paper, Korean business leaders in overwhelming majority regarded their Dominican employees as disrespectful, lazy, not punctual, dishonest, and uneducated.

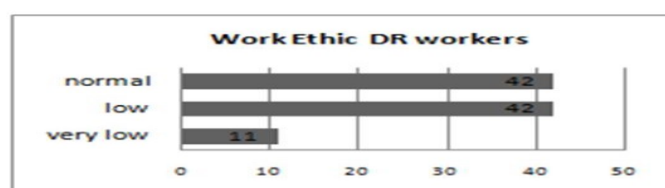


Figure 11. Opinion on workers' work ethic as a percentage of respondents



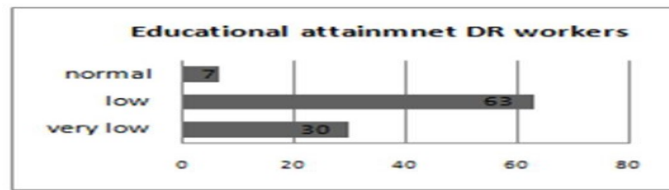


Figure 12. Opinion on workers' education as a percentage of respondents

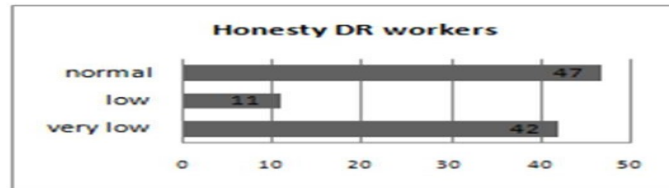


Figure 13. Opinion on workers' honesty as a percentage of respondents

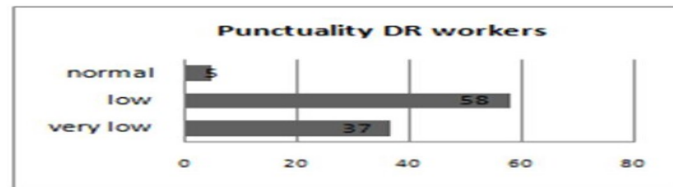


Figure 14. Opinion on workers' punctuality as a percentage of respondents

Korea has a long tradition of industriousness and hard work that led to the rapid industrialization and development of their nation. Respectfulness, punctuality, honesty, and education are paramount in Korean labor relations. Korean business leaders naturally judge their Dominican employees using the yardstick of Korean working culture. Out of 76 respondents, 40 believe respect level coming from Dominican workers is “low” and that accounts for a 52.63%. 28 persons or 36.84% believe their level of respect is normal and the remaining 8 persons or 10.53% think that respectfulness is high. Another important aspect of Korean work ethic is punctuality. Korean laborers are known for starting their work day early in the morning and staying until late at night. Dominicans and other Latin Americans are known for a very relaxed approach to timing. It is considered normal or acceptable to arrive five to ten minutes late or to leave work a bit earlier on Fridays.

When asked about the punctuality of their Dominican employees 36.84% of Korean business people said that punctuality habits were very low among Dominican workers. 44 respondents said punctuality in the workplace was low. When summing up “low” and “very low”, we see that 94.7% of Korean business owners find Dominican workers not punctual at work. Only 4 respondents or 5.26% think that Dominicans are punctual. Korean business owners were asked about how hard working their Dominican workers were. Out of 76 respondents, 8 rated very low for a 10.53%. 32 persons marked “normal” for a 42.11%. 32 persons responded “normal” accounting for a 42.11%. 4 persons said very high which represents a 5.26%. Honesty is a noble and important feature in Korean culture. It is known that Koreans often conduct businesses under informal oral contracts. 32 out of 76 Korean business owners or a 42.11% think Dominicans rank “very low” in honesty. 8 respondents said that honesty in Dominican workers is “low”. 36 respondents believe Dominican workers rank “normal” in honesty. More than half of respondents said that their Dominican employees are rather dishonest. However, Korean business leaders told the author of this study that dishonesty issues such as stealing, lying, arriving drunk to work or taking secret naps, are the price they have to pay for employing very low skilled and low pay workers.

Korean employers place great importance on their employees' education and training. High level of educational attainment enabled Koreans to overcome a shortage of natural resources and turn around their country's economy. Koreans regarded the level of education of their Dominican workers as very low. Out of 76 business

people, 16 said that educational attainment was “very low” and that represented a 21.05%. 32 persons believe Dominican workers’ educational level is “low” for a 42.11%. The remaining 28 respondents said that the level of education of Dominican workers was normal accounting for a 36.84%. During our session of interviews with Korean business leaders, we were told that in repeated occasions, company managers mentored employees teaching them basics such as writing their names or operating simple machinery. According to a Korean company owner interviewed by the author, most employees come to his factory without much schooling and lacking the most basic skills. Korean companies generally locate in some of the poorest areas of the Dominican Republic where a good education is virtually inexistent.

## **CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The Korean community is one of the latest to settle in the Dominican Republic with its origins dating back no longer than 30 years. Despite being relatively small when compared to other communities of foreigners in the Dominican Republic the Korean community has made important economic contributions with some 23 Korean owned companies operating in the Dominican Republic and providing hundreds of jobs. Unlike earlier Korean migrants to Latin America the members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic arrived in the country with sufficient capital and managerial experience that allowed them to start businesses and export textiles to the United States taking advantage of the preferential treatment given by the US government to imports from friendly Latin American countries including the Dominican Republic. In similar fashion to reports from international organizations such as Transparency International (2015), our study concludes that corruptions, crime, weak judiciary among other problems are big impediments to the development of more international business in the Dominican Republic.

For the conduction of this study, a total of 108 Korean adults living in the Dominican Republic were administered a copy of the survey to fill out. 108 participants could be considered an insufficient sample for this research, but in the case of the Korean community living in the Dominican Republic, the number seems appropriate due to the small number of Koreans living in the country. Field work for this research took place in Santo Domingo capital of the Dominican Republic in December of 2016.

Korean households reported monthly incomes several times higher than the average monthly income of a Dominican family. The results indicate that 90% of Korean households interviewed for this study earn at least five Dominican minimum wages per month. Poor Spanish language proficiency was cited as the main impediment to acculturation with only about a half of respondents to the survey identifying themselves as fair speakers of Spanish. Dominican food was found to be the aspect of Dominican culture that interested Koreans the most.

Crime was reported as the most pressing challenge facing members of the Korean community in the Dominican Republic. Over 50% of respondents to the survey pointed out that they feel unsafe walking in Dominican streets. Moreover, unsatisfactory resolutions of crimes involving Korean victims of kidnappings have increased a feeling of distrust for the Dominican legal system with over 70% of Koreans saying they do not trust the Dominican judiciary system.

Finally, Korean business leaders described Dominican workers as lacking in work ethic, punctuality, honesty, and education. Nevertheless, Korean business owners are of the idea that these deficiencies in the quality of the Dominican worker are the result of years of a failing Dominican education and social welfare system. It is fair to say that Korean business owners and professionals from other countries have expressed similar concerns and faced similar problems (Lim 2006).

### **Future Directions**

This research represents a first attempt at analyzing the Korean community living in the Dominican Republic. No previous studies have ever touched this subject, and therefore, there was not a single academic background on which to build at the time this paper was written.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is not to prove or even state a hypothesis but only to present and describe Koreans living in the Dominican Republic and document important aspects of their lives. This research is purely descriptive. We have put emphasis on the economic aspect of the lives of Koreans in the Dominican Republic

as a way of being able to recommend policies to Dominican policy makers to attract more foreign investment.

By not having a hypothesis formally presented this paper represents the first building block for further investigation about the Korean community in the Dominican Republic. For example, instead of just surveying how Korean people feel living or working in the Dominican Republic, new research can focus on the reasons why Koreans of a certain age or certain gender feel more or less safe in the Dominican Republic. Causal analysis can be conducted, and different presumptions can be tested. It would be interesting to test management styles of Korean business leaders both in Korea and abroad and develop the hypothesis based on that.

In this paper, we have just opened the doors for more critical thinking and testing. Future researchers can hypothesize on whether Korean business owners behave the same way in other Latin American countries based on the Dominican experience. Future researchers can elaborate more on the relationship between time of sojourn and adaptation to a new country. I believe it is possible to use this research as a building block to measure adaptability of Koreans to different environments and control many different variables. Equally important for future research is to explore how Korean opinions and feelings towards the Dominican Republic evolve. Previous researchers, for instance, targeted for Latin-American born Koreans of second and third generations (Kang 1993).

I hope my work has just sparked the curiosity of future academics to build on our discoveries and contribute to an even deeper understanding of Korean communities not only in the Dominican Republic but also in other Latin American countries.

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