

# Why to join ASEAN-Korea online exchange program? The case of Vietnam students

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## ABSTRACT

For more than 30 years of cooperation, ASEAN and Korea have organized many cultural exchange programs to promote cultural understanding among the youth and strengthen mutual collaboration. Before, these programs used to be organized in offline mode in ASEAN countries or Korea. However, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has been raging around the world, which requires a change in how these programs operate. All cultural exchange programs have to switch to online instead of offline due to travel difficulties and concerns about medical safety. This change in the form of operation dramatically influences the participation intention of the youth in ASEAN and Korea, including Vietnamese students. This study, thus, aims to investigate factors affecting the intention of Vietnamese students to join the ASEAN-Korea online exchange program. Accordingly, there are four factors affecting the intention to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs: while the program quality, personal development, and cultural interest positively affect the participation intention, the attendance cost has a negative impact on students' intention. Among the four factors mentioned previously, the program quality has the most significant positive influence. Importantly, there is no difference in the intention of participating among students of different age groups and genders in Vietnam. As the number of ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs for young people is now quite low, it is necessary to have more and more such programs in the future and it is recommended that ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs be promoted mainly through Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and the like. In addition, the program quality should take the highest priority when designing programs to encourage Vietnamese students to attend ASEAN-Korea online exchange program more.

**Key words:** ASEAN-Korea, online exchange, participation intention, students

## INTRODUCTION

During more than 30 years of cooperation, ASEAN and Korea have organized many cultural exchange programs to promote cultural understanding among the youth and strengthen mutual collaboration. According to Rosland, these programs play an essential role in the cooperation and development of the two sides<sup>1</sup>.

Before the pandemic, ASEAN-Korea cultural exchange programs were often held in one of the ASEAN countries or Korea. Students had the opportunity to experience the authentic culture and learn about ASEAN-Korea's cooperation in many aspects such as economics and diplomatic relationships<sup>2</sup>. However, recently, the Covid-19 pandemic has been raging around the world, which requires a change in how these programs operate. All cultural exchange programs have to switch to online instead of offline due to travel difficulties and concerns about medical safety. This change in the form of an organization dramatically influences the participation intention of the

youth in ASEAN and Korea, including Vietnamese students.

In Vietnam, the online exchange program is still a relatively new concept for the majority of students. The intention to participate in online ASEAN-Korea cultural exchange programs will depend on various factors. This study argues that the four elements, which are personal development, attendance cost, program quality, and cultural interest, would impact Vietnamese students' intention to participate in online ASEAN-Korea cultural exchange programs.

## LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

To embrace the benefits of multicultural learning, many institutes worldwide have launched exchange or study abroad programs. Cultural exchange programs create opportunities for students from all over the world to come and study in host countries and help them gain a more profound and better understanding of other participants' nations. Typically, students could go to host countries and stay there dur-

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ing their exchange periods. However, with the development of technology, cultural exchange programs could be performed online through the use of supporting applications. Regardless of organization formats, the purpose of cultural exchange programs remains the same, which is for promoting a peaceful world through friendly relations by education<sup>3</sup>.

Qi and Li indicate that individually related motivations encourage students to participate in overseas programs<sup>4</sup>. Cultural exchange programs, in one way or others, affect attitude, behavior, and ideas of individuals depending on how much one takes out of this opportunity<sup>3</sup>. Attending exchange programs is also a good way for students to acquire language proficiency as they need to use foreign languages to communicate in an international environment with peers from various places in the world. Besides, Ujitani stated that the intercultural communicative competence of the participants improved thanks to cultural exchange programs<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, the first hypothesis is put forward: *Hypothesis H1: Personal Development positively affects the participation intention of Vietnamese students*

Attendance cost is among the most influential factors affecting students' intention to choose abroad programs<sup>4</sup>. Students who were concerned with their financial situation would be less likely to study abroad and vice versa<sup>6</sup>. Filipa Sá indicated that increases in tuition fees have a negative effect on applications while the removal of upfront fees in 2001 boosted applications<sup>7</sup>. According to Petzold and Moog, the intention to study abroad is higher when there is financial support through scholarships; therefore, the lack of financial aids might make the exchange programs less appealing to potential participants<sup>8</sup>. Hence, the next hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis H2: Attendance Cost negatively affects the participation intention of Vietnamese students*

A positive relationship between students' perception of school image and program quality has a profound impact on shaping students' decision to participate in an exchange program. The intention to study abroad is higher if a good host university's reputation and support by an exchange program are provided<sup>8</sup>. Lu et al. also stated that many international students coming to Chengdu, China paid a lot of attention to the quality and content of the teaching<sup>9</sup>. Normally, exchange programs often allow students to participate in projects related to program themes to help students gain specialized knowledge. Obsolete topics seem unable to attract attention from students. In addition, the format should also be suitable for participants since students might have a different level of knowledge about using virtual supporting technology.

*Hypothesis H3: Program Quality positively affects the participation intention of Vietnamese students*

A guiding principle behind efforts to achieve greater understanding and mutual respect among the peoples of the world through cultural exchange is the belief that people learn to live together by living together<sup>10</sup>. Culture, more than language, was expressed throughout the experience as an all-pervasive influential characteristic in every aspect of the exchange<sup>11</sup>. When students feel an interest in one culture, they would often seek opportunities to learn about and experience it in depth. By taking part in cultural exchange programs, students could find out more about other cultures as well as their own from different perspectives. Without cultural interest, students are unlikely to join exchange programs, so the final hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis H4: Cultural Interest positively affects the participation intention of Vietnamese students*

Based on the previous hypothesis, a research model is proposed to analyze factors affecting the intention to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs of Vietnamese students. The research model consists of an independent variable and four dependent variables. The independent variable is the participation intention (IN). Four dependent variables include personal development (DE), the attendance cost (CO), the program quality (QA), and cultural interest (IE). The proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

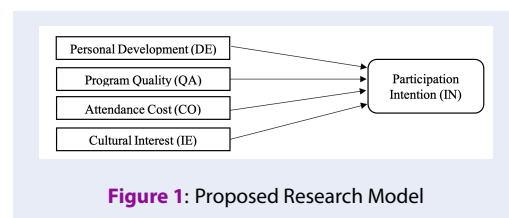


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Questionnaire Design

The survey consists of two main parts. The first one is to gather personal information of respondents, including age, gender, previous attending experience, media promotion, and favorite theme. The second one measures Vietnamese students' participation intention in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs. The scale used in the survey is a 5-level Likert scale from 1 – totally disagree to 5 – totally agree.

The second part of the survey includes 20 questions designed based on the constructs in the proposed research model. Each question would represent an observed variable. The observed variables are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Measuring the participation intention**

Constructs	CODE	Description
Personal Development	DE1	Participating in the program helps me expand my network of friends
	DE2	Participating in the program helps me increase my understanding of the program's topic
	DE3	Participating in the program helps me improve my foreign language skills
	DE4	Participating in the program helps me evaluate and improve myself
	DE5	Participating in the program helps me feel more mature and confident
Attendance Cost	CO1	I have prepared the cost to attend the program in advance
	CO2	I will not participate if the attendance cost exceeds my available financial capacity
	CO3	The cost of attending makes me lose interest in the program
	CO4	Programs without financial aid don't appeal to me
Program Quality	QA1	The theme of the program is new and attractive
	QA2	The program is designed in a format suitable for attendees
	QA3	The organizers and speakers of the program have prestige, reputation and high professional qualifications
Cultural Interest	IE1	I have a great interest in Korean culture
	IE2	I would like to explore more about Korean culture
	IE3	I would like to explore more about ASEAN culture
	IE4	Vietnamese culture and Korean culture have a close relation
Participation Intention	IN1	I am fully prepared to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs
	IN2	I have made a detailed plan to apply for ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs
	IN3	I'm ready to join ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs
	IN4	I will definitely apply for ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs in the future

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

### Sample size

According to Hair et al., the minimum random sample size used for Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is 50, with a ratio of observations to an analysis of 5:1 or 10:1<sup>12</sup>. The corresponding formula is  $n=5*m$  or  $n=10*m$ , where  $n$  is the minimum sample size and  $m$  is the number of variables included in the EFA analysis.

The minimum random sample size for regression analysis is  $n=50+8m$ , allowing the regression to evaluate only the goodness of fit of the model, and  $n=104+8m$  with the regression assessing the factor of each independent variable ( $n$  is the minimum sam-

ple size,  $m$  is the number of independent variables included in the regression analysis)<sup>13</sup>.

In this study, the number of observed variables included in the EFA analysis was 20, so the minimum number of observations should be  $10*20=200$  observations. The regression analysis model has four independent variables, so the minimum sample size is  $104+8*4=136$  observations. Since the writer uses the two analytical methods mentioned above, the minimum sample size must be the most extensive required sample size among the methods. **From that, for this research, the minimum random sample size should be 200 observations.**

### Data collection

The survey targeted Vietnamese students between 15 and 24 years old as they are the leading group participating in exchange programs. The survey is of Google Forms and spread via Facebook, Gmail, and Instagram from 3rd September to 10th September 2021. The survey used a random sampling method, and after a week, it collected 383 answers for the research. Only two answers are invalid, so the efficient rate is 99,5%. 381 valid responses are used to analyze the participation intention of Vietnamese students. **The number of proper responses meets the minimum number of observations requirement (381>200).**

## FINDINGS

### Participants

Most respondents are university students from 18 to 24 years old, while a mere minority are high school students. The number of female students surpasses that of their male counterparts. Five students prefer not to reveal their gender. Besides, most of the participants have had no experience attending ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs before (see Table 2).

### Reliability

**All quantitative variables are qualified to be included in the EFA analysis** because the total correlation coefficient is all greater than 0.3, and the Cronbach's Alpha value is all greater than 0.6. The total correlation coefficient value of IN1 is the highest (0.753), while the Cronbach's Alpha value of IN4 is the highest (0.847). Table 3 shows the result for Cronbach's Alpha Analysis.

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

Table 4 and Table 5 show the results of the EFA analysis of independent variables and the dependent variable. All observed variables meet the criteria through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and can be included in the linear regression analysis model.

### Independent Variable

For independent variables, the KMO value is 0.842 > 0.5, which shows that factors are suitable for the data set. The EFA model for the variable is also appropriate because the sig. Bartlett's Test is 0.000 < 0.05; the cumulative of variance is 62.795% > 50.00%; and the eigenvalue is larger than 1.000 (see in Table 4). The four extracted factors can explain 62.795% of the data variation of 20 observed variables participating in EFA.

### Dependent Variable

For dependent variable, the EFA analysis is also appropriate (KMO = 0.814 > 0.5; Eigenvalue is 2.894 > 1.000; sig. Bartlett's Test is 0.000 < 0.05) and it proves that all factors can be included in the regression analysis later.

### Regression Analysis

#### Model Fit

Table 6 below shows the results of the model fit analysis. The main indexes to test the model's fitness include the value of R<sup>2</sup>, the Durbin-Watson value, and the significance level of ANOVA.

The adjusted R<sup>2</sup> of the model (see Table 6) is 0.954 > 0.5, so this is considered a good research model, and four independent variables explain 95.4% of the change of the dependent variable.

With a sample size of 381 and 04 independent variables, we have  $d_L=1.816$  and  $d_U=1.856$  and a Durbin - Watson value (see Table 6) of 1.974  $\in$  [1.856;2.144], showing no first-order autocorrelation in the model. Sig. ANOVA (see Table 6) is 0.000 < 0.05, which means that the model is built to fit the population. VIF value is all under 2 (see Table 7), which means that the model has no multi-collinearity.

**From the analysis results, it can be concluded that the research model is suitable**

#### Linear Regression Model

From the table below, the sig. value of the constant is 0.07 > 0.05, showing no significance at the 5% statistical level. The rest of the variables have a sig. value of 0.000 < 0.05, so they are all significant at the statistical level of 5%.

With the results of the above regression analysis, the linear regression model of the research will be written as follows:

$$IN = 0,033 * DE - 0,036 * CO + 0,953 * QA + 0,042 * IE$$

### Hypothesis Test

From Table 7, it was clear that there is a significant positive correlation between program quality and participation intention ( $\beta = 0,953$ ; sig. = 0,000). Therefore, the H3 hypothesis is accepted, which means that the program quality has a positive influence on the intention of students. In addition, among four factors, the program quality is the factor with the greatest impact on the participation intention. This implies that organizers should prioritize the quality of exchange programs.

**Table 2: Profile of participants**

	Response Count	Response (%)
<b>Age</b>	381	100
From 15 to 17 years old	33	8.7
From 18 to 24 years old	348	91.3
<b>Gender</b>	381	100
Male	92	24.1
Female	284	74.5
Others	5	1.3
<b>Joining Experience</b>	381	100
No	364	95.5
Yes	17	4.5

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

In addition, the result ( $\beta = 0,033$ ; sig. = 0,000) also shows that personal development positively affects students' intention to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs, so the H1 hypothesis is verified. Similarly, cultural interest also has a positive impact on the participation intention of Vietnamese students ( $\beta = 0,042$ ; sig. = 0,0000). Hence, the H4 hypothesis is also approved.

In contrast to other factors, the attendance cost negatively affects the intention to take part in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs of Vietnamese youngsters ( $\beta = -0,036$ ; sig. = 0,0000), which verifies the H2 hypothesis. Table 8 below shows the results of testing four hypotheses.

### Independent Sample T-test

Table 9 indicates the Independent Sample T-test analysis of age vs the participation intention. According to this result (sig. Levene's Test is 0.723 > 0.05 and sig. T-test for equal variances assumed is 0.139 > 0.05), there is no difference in the participation intention between age groups. People from 15 to 17 years have the same intention to participate as those older.

### One-way ANOVA

The result from one-way ANOVA analysis (sig. Levene's Test is 0.549 > 0.05 and sig. ANOVA is 0.353 > 0.05) in Table 10 shows no significant difference among genders concerning the intention to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs. It means that regardless of gender, students have the same participation intention.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Discussion

To the best of my knowledge, this paper is the first one to explore factors affecting the intention to participate in online exchange programs between ASEAN and Korea. Accordingly, the paper provides a better understanding of the motivation to attend ASEAN-Korea exchange programs, especially those on online platforms. The empirical analysis results indicate that the program quality, personal development, and cultural interest encourage students to join but the attendance cost lowers their intention. Also, regardless of age and gender, students will have the same participation intention in these online exchange programs.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic is raging around the world and there are no other choices for organizers but adopt the new form of organizing online events. It is a brand-new approach and there might be difficulties for organizers to attract students. Therefore, this paper is expected to help organizers - those of ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs in particular and others in general - to gain an insight into the intention of students and provide better programs with a higher participation rate.

### Recommendation

In the future, it is necessary to have more and more ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs for youngsters because the number now is limited. Only 17 participants have had previous experience taking part in ASEAN-Korea Youth Summit, which seems to be the only online platform for young people from ASEAN

**Table 3: Cronbach’s Alpha Analysis**

Variable	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
<b>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.791)</b>		
DE1	0.496	0.774
DE2	0.547	0.759
DE3	0.644	0.730
DE4	0.584	0.748
DE5	0.588	0.746
<b>ATTENDANCE COST (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.799)</b>		
CO1	0.634	0.737
CO2	0.535	0.784
CO3	0.680	0.716
CO4	0.602	0.755
<b>PROGRAM QUALITY (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.852)</b>		
QA1	0.710	0.805
QA2	0.731	0.786
QA3	0.729	0.788
<b>CULTURAL INTEREST (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.732)</b>		
IE1	0.385	0.758
IE2	0.601	0.638
IE3	0.580	0.640
IE4	0.582	0.648
<b>PARTICIPATION INTENTION (Cronbach’s Alpha = 0.872)</b>		
IN1	0.753	0.825
IN2	0.725	0.836
IN3	0.728	0.835
IN4	0.701	0.847

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 4: EFA for the independent variable**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.842
Eigenvalue		1.078
Cumulative of Variance		62.795 %
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	2248.729
	df	120
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 5: EFA for the dependent variable**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.814	
Eigenvalue	2.894	
Cumulative of Variance	72.350 %	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi Square	749.058
	df	6
	Sig.	0.000

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 6: Model Fit Analysis**

Model	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Durbin - Watson	Sig. ANOVA
1	0.977 <sup>a</sup>	0.954	0.954	1.974	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), DE, CO, QA, IE  
b. Dependent Variable: IN

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 7: Regression Analysis**

Predictor	$\beta$	Sig.	VIF
Constant		0.070	
DE	0.033	0.011	1.414
CO	-0.036	0.006	1.409
QA	0.953	0.000	1.418
IE	0.042	0.002	1.424

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 8: Hypothesis Analysis**

Hypothesis	Predictor	Description	Expectation	Result
H1	DE	Personal Development	+	Accepted
H2	CO	Attendance Cost	-	Accepted
H3	QA	Program Quality	+	Accepted
H4	IE	Cultural Interest	+	Accepted

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 9: Independent Sample T-Test Analysis**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	0.126	0.723	-1.481	379	0.139
Equal variances not assumed			-1.286	36.438	0.207

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

**Table 10: One-way ANOVA Analysis**

Test of Homogeneity of Variances					
Levene's Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.		
0.600	2	378	0.549		
ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.568	2	0.284	1.045	0.353
Within Groups	102.753	378	0.272		
Total	103.321	380			

Source: Compiled by the author, 2021

and Korea to connect. Joining online exchange programs is of enormous significance for youths to promote mutual understanding and raise voices together to build a better community for the sake of ASEAN and Korea. There should be more collaboration between ASEAN-Korea Center and other organizations and universities to organize such online exchange programs for ASEAN and Korean youngsters.

As for Vietnamese students, social media would be the most effective way to promote online exchange programs (206 respondents say that they learn about online exchange programs through social media) so it is recommended that ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs be promoted mainly through Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, and the like. Additionally, because Vietnamese students pay a lot of attention to recommendations from schools and friends, the organizing committee needs to work with high schools and universities to help spread awareness about the programs. Such opportunities should also be posted publicly on organizers' websites as students consider them an efficient source of information. A good promotion plan would make programs appeal to students and increase their prestige.

However, the program quality should take the highest priority. The organizing committee should pay heed to the format as well as the theme of the programs. In terms of programs' topics, according to the survey, the two most favorite ones among Vietnamese students are "ASEAN - Korea Tourism and Culture Exchange" and "ASEAN-Korea Economy and the role of youths". The following ranks are "Study Abroad in Korea", followed by "The Youth of ASEAN-Korea and Climate Change". If future online programs choose these topics as discussion themes, they will likely attract Vietnamese students.

Besides, it is suggested that future programs be organized in the format of Model United Nations as

it could cover all these four topics and allow a large number of attendees at the same time. The reputation and qualifications of guest speakers also play an important role in getting students' attention so it is advised to invite professors and leaders of high profile.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has identified four factors affecting the intention to participate in ASEAN-Korea online exchange programs. While the program quality, personal development, and cultural interest positively affect the participation intention, the attendance cost has a negative impact on students' intention. Among four factors, the program quality has the greatest positive influence.

As this study explored only four factors affecting the participation intention of Vietnamese students, future researchers could add more predictors to the research model. For example, program requirements, such as registering procedure and language, or the impact of referrals are also predicted to affect students' intention to participate in exchange programs. Besides, this research is limited to Vietnamese youths, whereas future studies could spread to the Youth of other ASEAN countries and Korea with a larger sample size.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- ASEAN:** Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- EFA:** Exploratory Factor Analysis
- KMO:** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
- MOFA:** Ministry of Foreign Affairs

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.



## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All the content for the paper is done solely by the author.

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## TÓM TẮT

Trong hơn 30 năm hợp tác, ASEAN và Hàn Quốc đã tổ chức nhiều chương trình giao lưu văn hóa nhằm thúc đẩy sự hiểu biết văn hóa trong giới trẻ và tăng cường hợp tác lẫn nhau. Trước đây, các chương trình này thường được tổ chức trực tiếp tại các nước ASEAN hoặc Hàn Quốc. Tuy nhiên, thời gian gần đây, đại dịch Covid-19 đang hoành hành khắp thế giới và điều này đòi hỏi phải có sự thay đổi về cách thức hoạt động của các chương trình này. Tất cả các chương trình giao lưu văn hóa đều buộc phải chuyển sang hình thức trực tuyến thay vì trực tiếp do sự khó khăn trong di chuyển và lo ngại về an toàn y tế. Sự thay đổi về hình thức tổ chức này có ảnh hưởng đáng kể đến ý định tham gia của giới trẻ ASEAN và Hàn Quốc, trong đó có sinh viên Việt Nam. Do đó, nghiên cứu này nhằm điều tra các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến ý định tham gia chương trình giao lưu trực tuyến ASEAN-Hàn Quốc của sinh viên Việt Nam. Theo đó, có bốn yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến ý định tham gia các chương trình giao lưu trực tuyến ASEAN-Hàn Quốc: trong khi chất lượng chương trình, sự phát triển cá nhân và sở thích văn hóa ảnh hưởng tích cực đến ý định tham gia thì chi phí tham dự lại ảnh hưởng tiêu cực đến ý định tham gia của học sinh. Trong bốn yếu tố đã đề cập trước đó, chất lượng chương trình có ảnh hưởng tích cực đáng kể nhất. Một kết quả quan trọng khác là không có sự khác biệt về ý định tham gia của các sinh viên ở các nhóm tuổi và giới tính khác nhau ở Việt Nam. Trong tương lai, cần phải có nhiều hơn nữa các chương trình giao lưu trực tuyến ASEAN - Hàn Quốc dành cho các bạn trẻ vì số lượng chương trình hiện nay còn hạn chế. Ngoài ra, các chương trình giao lưu trực tuyến ASEAN - Hàn Quốc nên được giới thiệu và quảng bá chủ yếu thông qua một số nền tảng truyền thông như Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok và tương tự. Ngoài ra, chất lượng chương trình cần được ưu tiên hàng đầu khi thiết kế các chương trình nhằm khuyến khích sinh viên Việt Nam tham dự chương trình giao lưu trực tuyến ASEAN-Hàn Quốc nhiều hơn.

**Từ khoá:** ASEAN-Hàn Quốc, giao lưu trực tuyến, ý định tham gia, học sinh

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