

Transcript of Interview with JH by Jahaan Saini

Interviewee: JH

Interviewer: Jahaan Saini

Date: 09/17/2020

Location (Interviewee): South Korea

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: This is an audio interview with a classmate who is based in Korea. She is a freshman who is studying Pharmacy. She expresses her thoughts and experience on the current pandemic, Covid-19.

JH 0:00

So in Korea is 9:28 AM of September 18.

Jahaan Saini 0:08

Okay, so Hello, my name is Jahaan, and I'm very excited about this interview today. What is your name? And do you consent to be interviewed today?

JH 0:22

My name is [REDACTED]. And I'm also excited. And I do consent to the interview.

Jahaan Saini 0:29

Sounds great. Where are you currently based?

JH 0:33

I'm in South Korea right now.

Jahaan Saini 0:37

Where were you when COVID hit? And when did you actually learn about COVID?

JH 0:43

Um, so when, I was actually in Georgia, where my high school where I study, so I was, it was just like a normal day of high school, I was going through all the works and all the assignment and everything. And I actually knew about COVID-19 before because Korea had all the issues going on before like, it hit America. So I was getting news from my parents and my friends. And I was, I was worried about them. But it didn't really affect me because I didn't know it would hit America that fast, but it just suddenly did. And then the next day, I was actually kicked out of high school, the dorm. And they were actually asking us to leave because of all the things going on in the world. So yeah, that happened.

Jahaan Saini 1:40

Wow. And when you were discussing with your parents and your family at home, how did they describe the situation to be? Were they concerned like, it's a pandemic? Like it's going to get bad? Or were they like, "oh, there's this thing going on." Like, what was their reaction? And how were they telling you about it? I'm just curious to know.

JH 2:03

Well, they're, they kind of, they kind of describe what's going on in Korea and how the government is handling it. But they were also concerned if the pandemic, not the pandemic, but if the virus was gonna like transfer to different countries and everything because they kind of knew that the virus is really contagious and everything. So they're kind of, they're-, I think they had like a 50, they thought about 50/50 chance of going into pandemic or just like, contained in like, like East Asia part in it.

Jahaan Saini 2:44

So when did you decide to go back to Korea? Was it the day after or like, did you wait a few days, and then you flew back or how was...

JH 2:54

So our school they actually gave us, so the decision actually came out on Thursday. And we had to decide to like, to stay in America or to leave like, to leave to our own country until like Monday. So I had like that few days to decide on and the first day, I actually decided to stay in America and see how it's going. And I actually had a option to stay at my friend's house or my uncle's house. So I was like, trying to see how it's gonna go in America and everything. But the next day, I changed my decision because my parents were like, talking about how it might be

actually safer to come to Korea because we don't know what's going to happen in America and all the like, health like insurance and everything. We don't know if that's gonna cover if I get like, affected and everything. So it was actually going back and forth about like, going back to Korea or staying in America. And, and thankfully, the plane ticket wasn't actually that hard to get. So I just like, decided to come to Korea eventually after like three days or something like that.

Jahaan Saini 4:17

Yeah, I feel like for international students, it's always a bunch of other factors that we have. It's not just like, a yes or no.

JH 4:26

Yeah.

Jahaan Saini 4:26

So, I totally agree with you on that. So what were your initial feelings towards the virus? And have they changed from what your feelings are currently towards the virus?

JH 4:39

Um, so my initial thought was actually that virus is just like, a normal, just like a little more contagious flu virus. That's literally what I thought because it is a retrovirus of the influenza and the flu. So that's what I thought and I, because it wasn't really like deadly and everything, I thought it's not gonna be that bad. I don't, I didn't think it was gonna be this like, affected like globally affected and everything. But now I see it I'm just like, I'm not terrified of it. Because I know that even though I get infected, I wouldn't be that like, like suffering from it because I'm like, young and healthy and everything, but I'm just worried about people around me who's not really like, as healthy as me like, my mom she's at, she was actually sick for-, before getting, going into pandemic and everything, so she's not in the like, really good health or anything. So I'm afraid of that of like, me getting sick and actually transferring to her and everything. So I feel like my conception or my thought about virus actually changed into more like that I should be careful about it, and I should be more cautious about, like how I act and everything.

Jahaan Saini 6:06

Definitely I agree with you. Have you learned anything about yourself or the people around you or just your surroundings or anything that has, kind of any learning moment that you've had during this virus? Personal it could be anything.

JH 6:27

So I told you that we had to like leave our school and everything right. So that also meant that we were not having prom, senior prom and graduation. So I wasn't able to go to my graduation and prom and everything. So and we, and it was like after the first semester and us getting all the acceptance and everything, so it was going to be our like fun time for the seniors. But we weren't able to do that. So that kind of taught me that I really could have spent more time with my friends. Because I was so like, my, all my friends were, we were just so focused on what we have to, what we have to do - college applications, finishing all the work. So it was just really overwhelming to us. So we were really focused on what's like right in front of us not like spending time with each other and making memories and everything, so... because we thought that we would have that time eventually. But that didn't happen. So that actually taught me that like, when, when you have the time to spend with your loved one, you really have to, like, you really have to, really have to be like, I don't know how to say it, catch the chance or like yeah, you have to really like know that something can happen in your, in your life that you didn't expect. So you just have to go, how [unintelligible].

Jahaan Saini 9:09

Yeah, definitely. Like, there's a lot of things that we all have taken for granted, and it's put those things into perspective. And I agree with you. Have, so how was the community you're currently in, how did it deal with the virus? So right now you're in Korea. Just curious to know like, how they dealt with the virus initially, how they're dealing with it right now? Um, what does the future of the virus look like within your community just to get an idea because in the U.S. right now, it doesn't look good.

JH 8:49

Well, Korea, it actually started, they actually responded to the virus really strongly at the first like, from the first time. So they were doing all this like tracing, tracking, and testing and everything. And we actually, they actually tested a lot of people. And it's still happening, but like, as the time passed, I still like all the new like, a mutant, newly infected like, number and rates goes down, people actually kind of like got you know, loose, if I can say, so the government's like, their action also kind of loosened up. So they were actually like telling people like, it's okay, it's not like, totally fine but it's okay to slowly start going into like, our new, our original economic cycle and everything and like original lifestyle, but it actually wasn't that like, helpful to the situation because as we loosened up, it actually loosened up a lot of people, a lot of

citizens and everything. So it kind of caused a new wave of infected people and everything. And now after getting, after like having like, 400 new cases and 500 new cases a day, the government is, they actually raised... Okay, so before going on to raising, so Korea now have like three steps of like, alertness. So there's like first and second and third. So we're now, we're in second. And we used to be in second, but that they actually raised to 2.5. But not going to third one, the most like, that one is almost like a lockdown and everything. So they didn't go there. But they actually raised to 2.5. So it made people to not go to like public places, all the public places were like, closed, got closed. And a lot of like restaurants are closed, and restaurants were not able to open their places until nine. So they have to close after nine. And so that actually affected people and that I think, that helped, the numbers went down. But I don't know if that'll actually like last, you know.

Jahaan Saini 11:26

That was very helpful. It kind of put things into perspective of how like they have the three tiers. And it's good to know. Um, so how has COVID affected your short term versus long term plans, if you want to share this because I know that's a lot of pressure to like ask someone like, what are your goals and stuff? It's good to kind of think about how COVID has affected us currently, but also like, in the long term and in the future.

JH 12:00

Mm hmm. Well, for the short term plans, I was actually planning to go like, traveling for my senior like senior tr-, trip and everything before going to college. So that's what I wanted to do over summer. But as all the travels are like not allowed now, I can't do that. And so like, and the short term I was just, I just had all this like fun plans for like graduating from high school and like it's my first year going to college. I just had all the fun plans do but it just didn't work. But like for the long term, I feel like now, I feel like due to Coronavirus, I think we're going to have like new style of working; there's going to be like remote like, working and everything. So I think, I don't think like all the business will want to change into remote working and, but I feel like they're actually going to have options of it, and they will have it like as like a plan to, to for the future setting if we have such thing like this. So I feel like being a pharmacy student, I don't think I will be like affected with like, remote learning if I go to like, actually end up being a pharmacist or like, end up going to like pharmaceutical science company. But I think mys-, I don't know actually. I think for the long term, my job, itself, won't be that affected. But I would be more, I would have to be more like, cautious with like infectious diseases and how the trend is going and everything.

Jahaan Saini 13:58

Also good to know that you are a pharmacy. . .

JH 14:00

Yeah, I'm a pharmacy major. Yeah.

Jahaan Saini 14:05

Um, so this is a more personal question, but like you said, it's okay if I ask. Um, do you know of people that have been affected with COVID?

JH 14:15

Do you mean like, getting infected or just like their life affected?

Jahaan Saini 14:22

Getting infected.

JH 14:26

I actually have a friend who was actually infected with Coronavirus. I didn't know about that until she actually got off, got out of hospital. She didn't tell me anything. And I was kind of like, upset about that because why wouldn't she, I'm her friend and everything. I was kind of like, sad about that. But she told me because she didn't tell me because she was like, she didn't want to worry. Like, she didn't want me to worry about her and everything. So I actually heard about that, and she's doing fine, and she's, I'm not gonna say her name, but she's, she's also a freshman, but she's going to Georgia Tech. And she's doing, I think she's doing okay. And I know she's doing okay, but I'm just worried about her because you know, Coronavirus, even though you are infected once, you can be infected again everything. So I was, I'm just kind of worried about her.

Jahaan Saini 15:28

Yeah, yeah, definitely. But I'm glad that she feels better now.

JH 15:34

Yeah.

Jahaan Saini 15:35

Um, so what are ways that you personally have dealt with the pandemic? I know it can be frustrating to stay in all day and [audio cuts out] remotely. So there are little things that people like to do that kind of keeps them busy, but also sane. I'm wondering like, how have you dealt with the virus and how have you been able to kind of keep yourself in, like a state of mind?

JH 16:08

So while Coronavirus was really like, like really widespread and there were a lot of like new cases every day, I actually stayed at my home for like, I don't know, like two months or something like that. I mostly stayed in my home unless I had to went out or, or unless, like my family wanted to get out. So I did a lot of puzzles actually. I did a lot of jigsaw puzzle. So there's like, there's like three boxes of like, thousand piece jigsaw puzzle at my house. So my sister and I, we actually just finished one is with the Pegasus, so it was hard, but like we were doing like a lot of those. And so in Korea, there's like, weird thing going on about like, trying to do like this challenge, challenge things and everything. So there is like, there was like a weird thing about like, like, trying to, like whipping like thousand times of coffee so you can make it as like, like a little like, puffy little thing. Yeah, yeah. So they were actually doing that. And we actually did quite a lot, quite a few times. Because that actually, that is actually fun. It's hard, but it's, but it's actually fun to do. And it's like a fun way to like, spend time. So we were actually whipping. And it was, yeah, we would, we spent times like that. It was funny, though,

Jahaan Saini 17:45

That, I feel like a lot of people found the cooks in them, and everybody was cooking and cheffing it up so...

JH 17:55

Definitely.

Jahaan Saini 17:56

So this is my last and final question. But I just wanted to mention something that I think is very important. I feel like a lot of people have been talking about it during the pandemic because just staying at home doesn't seem to be the thing for everybody. It's not [audio cuts out] an introvert, not everybody feels comfortable spending so much time with themselves. I think mental health is very, is a very important issue. And especially during this pandemic, I think checking in on people is very crucial. So again, and make sure like how you're doing with that. And like yeah,

just if you're doing good, or if you need anyone to talk to, and [audio cuts out] that something that's very important.

JH 18:49

Yeah, it is important. I do agree with you like, the mental health, there are a lot of people who's getting into depression. And there's a lot of people who's actually needing for advice and needing for like, their like therapy session and everything. Because of just like saying home is not their thing at all, and it affects their mental health. And I'm personally an introvert. So first, like first few months, like first two months, I was actually fine with like staying home and everything but actually, when I went to like third like, my third month of like, just like staying at home, I was actually getting like, I don't know, I was just like so like, um, I don't know how to say it but so tired and exhausted of staying at home and everything. So that's when I start, actually started like exercising and going to like gym. The gym didn't work out. But I was doing like a home exercise and everything, was just like running around the park. And that's actually how I dealt with my mental health and that helped because just like actually exercising I think made me like think that I'm actually outside then I can like, just like look around and see like different colors and everything. Because staying at home you only see like, certain colors and it's just like, you don't like it. But yeah. Yeah. So I dealt with this, and I think people should, it's actually good to exercise I think exercise is a good way to like deal with your mental health and like depression, because you can focus on other thing, other than thing, things other than just like your home and that you're like stuck, and everything. So I think exercising is a good method too, and if someone needs like to talk to someone... I actually FaceTime a lot with my friends in America. So just like calling them for like an hour actually helped my mood for the day. Because I just, just like talking to them and knowing about what they're doing and telling them what I'm doing, just like that simple conversation just helped my mood because it seems like that said a lot of things are, there are things that's normal because, and knowing that there are things that's normal actually helps to think that your life is not a total, I don't know, crap.

Jahaan Saini 21:37

That is a good way, I feel like even I did that a lot, just like makes you feel closer, makes you feel like you're around people and is definitely needed. But yeah. I think those are all my questions. But thanks so much for taking out the time and I know they're [unintelligible]

JH 22:02

Thank you.