

The Relationship between Resilience and Cross-Cultural Adaptation among International Students from a Chinese University

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Abstract: *This study investigated the relationship between resilience and cross-cultural adaptation of international students in a Chinese university. Survey method (Questionnaire) was used and 85 international students from 12 different countries completed this questionnaire. Resilience Scale questionnaire and Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale questionnaire were used in this study. As hypothesized, there is a correlation between resilience and cross-cultural adaptation of international students. But, the result showed that there was no significant correlation between resilience and socio-cultural adaptation of the international students in China. However, there were significant differences of resilience of students according to age group, country, length of year they had lived in China and their marital status. Moreover, there is a significant difference of socio-cultural adaptation of students based on their residence years in China.*

Keywords: resilience, cross-cultural adaptation

1. Introduction

Nowadays, the numbers of oversea students who study in China are increasingly gradually. The students from different countries and different continents come to China for their studying. All of the international students have to face cultural challenges while they live in China. They hope to overcome the difficulties and challenges which they experience in new environment. They also need to adjust both of their inner mind and outer environment which they live for studying. They must have the ability to be flexible with different cultures of their colleagues and the host country's culture to get success in their study. Therefore, students need resilience to adapt the stresses and to live well. If they have the ability to resist the challenges and difficulties, they can achieve comfortably to their goals.

Arve Gunnestad (2006) stated that "Resilience means the ability to cope and do well in life in spite of having had to face a number of difficulties". Culture is the way we meet and greet, the way we work and celebrate, what we eat and how we eat it, the way we relate to each other and the way we solve our differences. Culture can be said to be a way of living facing the challenges in a certain environment with certain climate, certain natural and practical conditions (Arve Gunnestad, 2006).

Numerous research studies about expatriates have shown that expatriates experience from changes such as food, language, working/living environment, manners to deal with people and things both work and non-work related (Aycan, 1997; Lueke&Svyantek, 2000; & Young-Chul, 1996).

The demand for expatriates, especially those from management levels, to live and work overseas has also grown because of world business has increased. Thus, preparing expatriates to overcome the obstacles that they

may confront in foreign countries becomes important. Lack of adjustment to local culture is a main reason causing expatriates to be unfulfilled with their work and life abroad. Most unsuccessful expatriates tend to be reluctant to interact with host nationals and to participate in local social life, which reduces their commitments to the host countries' culture (Lueke& Svyantek, 2000). Embarrassment, frustration, disappointment, loneliness, together with homesickness may follow expatriates as the length of time staying in a different country increase (Young-Chul, 1996). Suffering from all the psychological feelings and struggling with cross-cultural adjustment, expatriates may fail to fulfill their tasks and, depending of individual personality factors, become depressed.

With the internationalization of higher education, the university becomes a place where students coming from different countries gather together to pursue knowledge and skills (Richardson & McKenna, 2001). Li Zhao mentioned that students from overseas, are similar to expatriates stepping into a foreign country differing from their original culture, may also confront those challenges and obstacles discussed above; both in academic work and social integration. And most of them may feel isolated from the host society as they struggle between being invisible and adaptable. Lin and Yi (1997) also stated that many overseas students showed symptoms of depression, which were a result of a lack of concentration, and low motivation with respect to academic study and social life. If an international student cannot handle these challenges and adjust according to the host culture, he or she may tend to less satisfied with their performance and even quit. Therefore, adjustments to cultures of host countries are equally important for international students. (Zhao, Li., 2010).

Different cultures have different norms to guide behavior. Thus, the cultural adjustment demands of international students can be important due to the differences between their cultural backgrounds and those of the host country. (Zhao, Li., 2010). Past research suggests that effective communication with professors and peers in academic settings, and comfortable interactions with local people in social situations are crucial elements in the successful adjustment of international students to the host country culture. (Bandura, 1977)

Resilience can be better explained as the opportunity and capacity of individuals to find psychological, social, cultural and physical resources that will provide for their well-being, and their prospect and ability alone or with others, to benefit from these resources and in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008). Some conceptual differences in resilience pertaining to university students in their higher education. (Walker, et al., 2006). Previous literature stated that students who are resilient are able to manage that they face during transition to a university in a foreign country and they are academically successful (Compas, Wagner, Slavin&Vannatta, 1986; Gall, Evans & Bellerose, 2000). Resilience students deal with some difficulties such as loneliness and separation, language, immigration status, discrimination and final concerns (Reynoso, 2008). The best definition of resilience is that it is the ability to adapt successfully to difficult and hostile situations, at the same time they point to the significance of personal characteristics which play a major role in determining how successfully a human will be in adapting to the adverse circumstance. (Zautra, Hall and Murray, 2010).

However, there are no research of resilience and socio-cultural adaptation before. This study hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between resilience and socio-cultural adaptation; the more students have better resilience, the more they can adapt the difficulties of different cultures they confront. The research questions that direct to this study are as follows:

- 1) Are there any significant differences in resilience and socio-cultural adaptation by gender, age, country, residence years, marital status and frequently language used?
- 2) Is there the relationship between resilience and socio-cultural adaptation among international students?

2. Methodology

The survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between resilience and cross-cultural adaptation of international students in a Chinese university.

a) Participants

The participants were 85 international students from 11 countries in northeast normal university.

b) Instruments

The researchers used two scales: resilience scale and socio-cultural adaptation scale for this study with the following labels describing specific answer categories: as = “strongly agree”, a = “agree”, n = “neutral”, d = “disagree” and Sd =

“strongly disagree”. Demographic variables such as gender, age, country, residence year, marital status, and frequently language used etc. were added in the first part of the questionnaire in order to find out the differences between groups.

For measuring the resilience of the participants, resilience scale questionnaire consists of 25 items with 2 sub-scales, 17 items for personal competence subscale and 8 items for acceptance of self and life subscale. The socio-cultural adaptation questionnaire consists of 29 items with 2 sub-scales, 22 items for behavioral adaptation difficulty and 7 items for cognitive adaptation difficulty. Both the questionnaires use 5-point Likert skills. Resilience scale questionnaire was adopted from Wagnild, G.M. & Young, H.M., 1987. Socio-cultural adaptation questionnaire was adopted from Zhao, Li., 2010. The survey questions were displayed in Appendices.

3. Results

For research question 1, to find the differences in resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by gender, independent sample t-test was used. The result revealed that there was no significant difference in resilience of international students between male and female, $t(83) = .522, p = 0.603$. However, there was significant difference in cross-cultural adaptation (CCA) difficulty between male and female, $t(83) = 2.663, p = 0.009$. (See Table 1.)

Table 1: Result of Independent Sample t-test for Cross-cultural Adaptation by Gender

| Variables | Gender | N | Mean | SD | Mean Difference | t | df | P |
|---------------------------|--------|----|-------|--------|-----------------|-------|----|------|
| Socio-Cultural Adaptation | Male | 57 | 65.04 | 16.768 | 10.249 | 2.663 | 83 | .009 |
| | Female | 28 | 54.79 | 16.480 | | | | |

According to table 1, the mean score of males is 65.04 and that of female is 54.79 for socio-cultural adaptation difficulty. This indicated that males have more difficulties than females from this university in socio-cultural adaptation.

Table 2: Mean Scores of Resilience and Cross-cultural Adaptation by Age

| Age | N | Mean of Resilience | Mean of CCA | SD of Resilience | SD of CCA |
|--------------|----|--------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| 20-24 | 26 | 94.96 | 61.00 | 12.833 | 20.229 |
| 25-29 | 27 | 88.15 | 58.11 | 16.808 | 16.637 |
| 30-34 | 19 | 98.42 | 65.00 | 10.303 | 15.895 |
| 34 and above | 13 | 101.15 | 65.46 | 8.092 | 13.920 |
| Total | 85 | 94.52 | 61.66 | 13.853 | 17.269 |

According to table 2, the mean scores of age groups for resilience are 94.96, 88.15, 98.42 and 101.15 respectively and it showed that the mean scores of age groups for Cross-Cultural Adaptation (CCA) are 61.00, 58.11, 65.00 and 65.46 respectively. Therefore, we analyzed one-way ANOVA to investigate the differences in resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by age groups.

Table 3: One-Way ANOVA Result of Resilience by Age

| Age | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1962.531 | 3 | 654.177 | 3.742 | .014 |
| Within Groups | 14158.693 | 81 | 174.799 | | |
| Total | 16121.224 | 84 | | | |

Table 3 showed that there was a significant difference among age group for resilience of international students from this university, $F(3,81) = 3.742, p=.014$. To get more detailed information, we analyzed Bonferroni test for post-hoc analyses. (see Table 4)

Table 4: Bonferroni Result of Resilience by Age

| (I) Age | (J) Age | Mean Difference (I-J) | Sig. |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 20-24 | 25-29 | 6.813 | 0.386 |
| | 30-34 | -3.46 | 1 |
| | 34 and above | -6.192 | 1 |
| 25-29 | 20-24 | -6.813 | 0.386 |
| | 30-34 | -10.273 | 0.067 |
| | 34 and above | -13.006* | 0.028 |
| 30-34 | 20-24 | 3.46 | 1 |
| | 25-29 | 10.273 | 0.067 |
| | 34 and above | -2.733 | 1 |
| 34 and above | 20-24 | 6.192 | 1 |
| | 25-29 | 13.006* | 0.028 |
| | 30-34 | 2.733 | 1 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to Bonferroni result, significant difference was found between the 34 and above age group and the 25-29 age group, $p<0.05$. Therefore, the participants from 34 and above group have better resilience than age group of 25-29. However, there were no significant differences between 20-24 and 25-29, between 20-24 and 30-34, between 20-24 and 34 and above, between 25-29 and 30-34 and between 25-29 and 30-34 at 0.05 level. However, there was no significant difference for cross-cultural adaptation by age, $F(3,81) = .835, p=.479 (p>0.05)$ according to one way ANOVA result.

To explore whether there was any significant difference for resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by country, one-way ANOVA was analyzed. The following table 5 showed the mean scores of resilience by 11 countries, 102.43, 90.89, 95.2, 66.2, 89.5, 95.9, 98.6, 96.8, 94.17, 107.1 and 90.83 respectively.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Resilience and Cross-cultural Adaptation (CCA). by Country

| Country | N | Mean of Resilience | Mean of CCA | SD of Resilience | CCA |
|-------------|----|--------------------|-------------|------------------|--------|
| Tanzania | 7 | 102.43 | 64.43 | 9.144 | 16.144 |
| Indonesia | 9 | 90.89 | 62.22 | 9.493 | 17.584 |
| Korea | 5 | 95.2 | 63.4 | 25.144 | 30.072 |
| Afghanistan | 5 | 66.2 | 57.6 | 26.405 | 10.09 |
| Thailand | 6 | 89.5 | 57.33 | 5.822 | 16.133 |
| Cambodia | 10 | 95.9 | 66.9 | 7.047 | 22.908 |
| South Sudan | 10 | 98.6 | 69.8 | 8.644 | 14.627 |
| Russia | 5 | 96.8 | 47.4 | 6.76 | 14.223 |
| Laos | 6 | 94.17 | 63.67 | 11.72 | 6.623 |
| Pakistan | 10 | 107.1 | 71.2 | 3.635 | 9.589 |
| Myanmar | 12 | 90.83 | 48.58 | 7.542 | 13.406 |
| Total | 85 | 94.52 | 61.66 | 13.853 | 17.269 |

In table 5, there are mean scores of cross-cultural adaptations by 11 countries, 64.43, 62.22, 63.4, 57.6, 57.33, 66.9, 69.8, 47.4, 63.67, 71.2 and 48.58 respectively.

According to this table, one-way ANOVA was analyzed to explore the significant differences for resilience and cross-cultural adaptation of international students from different countries. There was significant difference in resilience among countries, $F(4,80) = 2.987, p=.024 (p<0.05)$ (see Table 6)

Table 6: One-Way ANOVA Result of Resilience by Country

| Country | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 2094.742 | 4 | 523.686 | 2.987 | .024 |
| Within Groups | 14026.481 | 80 | 175.331 | | |
| Total | 16121.224 | 84 | | | |

To know which country has better resilience than others, Bonferroni test was used. (See Table 7).

Table 7: Bonferroni Result of Resilience by Country

| (I) Country | (J) Country | Mean Difference (I-J) | Sig. |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------|
| Afghan | Tanzania | -36.229* | 0 |
| | Indonesia | -24.689* | 0.011 |
| | Korea | -29.000* | 0.007 |
| | Thailand | -23.3 | 0.059 |
| | Cambodia | -29.700* | 0 |
| | South Sudan | -32.400* | 0 |
| | Russia | -30.600* | 0.003 |
| | Laos | -27.967* | 0.006 |
| | Pakistan | -40.900* | 0 |
| | Myanmar | -24.633* | 0.006 |

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

According to Bonferroni results, table 7 explained that there was significant difference between participants from Afghanistan and that from other 9 countries except Thailand for resilience at 0.05 level ($p<0.05$). For participants from other 10 countries, there were no significant differences among these countries for resilience. However, there was no significant difference for cross-cultural adaptation by country, $F(10, 74) = 1.942, p=.053 (p>0.05)$ according to ANOVA result. To examine the differences in resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by residence year, one-way ANOVA was computed. The following table 8 showed that the mean score of resilience and cross-cultural by their residence year with four groups.

Table 8: Mean Scores of Resilience and Cross-cultural Adaptation by Residence Year

| Residence Year | N | Mean of Resilience | Mean of CCA | SD of Resilience | SD of CCA |
|----------------|----|--------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------|
| 1-2 | 65 | 63.80 | 63.80 | 16.991 | 16.991 |
| 2-3 | 4 | 61.00 | 61.00 | 21.463 | 21.463 |
| 3-4 | 8 | 47.75 | 47.75 | 14.028 | 14.028 |
| 4 and above | 8 | 58.50 | 58.50 | 16.423 | 16.423 |
| Total | 85 | 61.66 | 61.66 | 17.269 | 17.269 |

According to table 8, the mean scores of residence year for resilience are 13.734, 7.853, 10.021 and 13.049 respectively and it showed that the mean scores of residence-year groups for cross-cultural adaptation are 63.80, 61.00, 47.75 and 58.50 respectively. Therefore, we analyzed one-way ANOVA for research question 4, to investigate the differences in resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by residence-year groups.

Table 9: One-way ANOVA Result of Resilience by Residence Years

| Residence Year | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1970.364 | 3 | 656.788 | 3.759 | .014 |
| Within Groups | 14150.860 | 81 | 174.702 | | |
| Total | 16121.224 | 84 | | | |

Table 9 showed that there was a significant difference among residence-year groups for resilience of international students from this university, $F(3, 81) = 3.759, p = .014$. To get more detailed information, we analyzed Bonferroni test for post-hoc analyses. (See table 10).

Table 10: Bonferroni Result of Resilience by Residence Year

| (I) Residence Year | (J) Residence Year | Mean Difference (I-J) | Sig. |
|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------|
| 1-2 | 02-Mar | -8.485 | 1 |
| | 03-Apr | -14.860* | 0.021 |
| | 4 and above | -7.485 | 0.808 |
| 2-3 | 01-Feb | 8.485 | 1 |
| | 03-Apr | -6.375 | 1 |
| | 4 and above | 1 | 1 |
| 3-4 | 01-Feb | 14.860* | 0.021 |
| | 02-Mar | 6.375 | 1 |
| | 4 and above | 7.375 | 1 |
| 4 and above | 01-Feb | 7.485 | 0.808 |
| | 02-Mar | -1 | 1 |
| | 03-Apr | -7.375 | 1 |

According to Bonferroni result, significant difference was found between the 1-2 and 3-4 residence-year group, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the participants from 3-4 residence-year group have better resilience than that from 1-2 residence-year group. However, there were no significant differences between 1-2 and 2-3, between 1-2 and 4 and above, between 2-3 and 3-4, between 2-3 and 4 and above, between 3-4 and 4 and above at 0.05 level.

Table 11: One-Way ANOVA Result for Cross-cultural Adaptation by Residence Year

| Residence Year | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 1927.206 | 3 | 642.402 | 2.250 | .089 |
| Within Groups | 23123.900 | 81 | 285.480 | | |
| Total | 25051.106 | 84 | | | |

One-way ANOVA was conducted to test the differences of cross-cultural adaptation by the groups. The results show that there were no significant differences in cross-cultural

adaptation among and between the four groups for overall $[F(3, 81) = 2.25, p = .089]$.

Further, for research question 5, to explore whether there was any significant difference for resilience and cross-cultural adaptation by marital status, independent sample t-test was used. The result revealed that there was significant difference in resilience of international students between married and single, $t(83) = -2.315, p = .023$. (See table 12)

Table 12: Result of Independent Sample t-test for Resilience by Marital Status

| Variables | Marital Status | N | Mean | SD | Mean Difference | t | df | P |
|------------------|----------------|----|--------|--------|-----------------|-------|----|------|
| Resilience Total | Single | 62 | 92.45 | 14.628 | -7.635 | -2.31 | 83 | .023 |
| | Married | 23 | 100.09 | 9.746 | | | | |

According to table 12, the mean score of single participants is 92.45 and that of married participants is 100.09 for resilience difficulty. This indicated that married student has better in resilience than single students. However, there was no significant difference for socio-cultural adaptation between single and married.

To find there was any significant difference in resilience and socio-cultural adaptation by frequently language used. We separated into three language groups (i. Mother tongue group, English language group, Chinese language group) to find any difference among and between the three groups. One-way analysis of ANOVA was computed and according to the results of ANOVA, there were no significant differences for resilience and socio-cultural adaptation among the three groups. For resilience, $[F(2, 82) = 1.236, p = .296]$, for socio-cultural adaptation, $[F(2, 82) = 1.286, p = .282]$

Finally, for research question 2, to find whether there was any relationship between resilience and socio-cultural adaptation among international students, Pearson correlation was analyzed. The results showed that students' resilience and socio-cultural adaptation are not significantly correlated, $r = 0.087, p = .426 (p < .05)$.

4. Discussion

This study explored that male and female international students have the same equal resilience from this university. It can be concluded that as they live under the same supports from this university, there was no different feeling about the resilience for them. It is consistent with the result of Sabouripour & Roslan (2015) which stated there was significant difference between the genders for resilience. In one of the researches about resilience of the international students from Australian National University, they did a project to investigate the keys for resilience of international postgraduate students. Although some students suggested the university to do changes for university policy, attitude, culture and policy, they mentioned about the assumption which resilience is the individual responsibility of each student by themselves (ANU Counselling Centre, 2016). However, male students have more difficulty in following the rules and regulations, going shopping and dealing with

someone who is unpleasant. It may be because most of the international students are initially unconscious of the new culture of the host country, they feel difficult to adapt the new features of China and they still need to acquire the socio-cultural skill to do some group participation. This current research showed that the older age group (34 and above) can be resistant about the challenges of upcoming difficulties in abroad country for them than the younger age group (25-29). Age is related with the socio-cultural adaptation (Zhao, 2010). However, it is not consistent with this previous research concerning age group for socio-cultural adaptation in this current finding which is not significantly different. According to communication theorists (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), also presumes that communication concerns with the individual's ability to collaborate skillfully in everywhere, intercommunication is the essential skill of cultural adaptation

Among 11 countries, this finding showed that participants from Afghanistan country feel less resilience than other 9 countries. It can be noted that there was inconvenient feeling about the resilience for Afghanistan participants. To know clearly for this factor, it may be better interviewing of their resilience problems about their approaches to resilience (e.g. social, physical/exercise, etc.). Therefore, we suggest further researches to explore the reasons or factors influencing the resilience difficulties with follow up investigation. However, there was cultural adaptation among the countries equally. This result is consistent with the research of Zhao (2010) which investigated the different cultures have socio-cultural adaptation. Participants who have longer residence year can overcome the life pressures and stresses than less residence ones. They know a lot of resources to solve the problems if they have, because of their long period in here. Therefore, they are more resilient compared with the less period participants. This result is consistent with the more resilient persons can be successful in stressful events (Compas et al. 1986). For cross-cultural adaptation, adaptation can be done by both of less period participants and long period ones successfully. And also, an international student can go ahead from the unfamiliar state to the center of more understanding by adapting and adjusting his/her psychological journey as Bennett (1986) states it, from ethno-centrism to ethno-relativism. Married participants have better resilience than single participants in this research. It can be concluded that married participants can share their difficult situations to their partners and they can get the supports from them to relieve. It is probably true that ANU counseling center (2016) project highlighted the socializing approach to resilience according to the responses of the international students, for example, "spend time with my family", "...seek help from family". Most of the international students who left their families, wives or husbands and children in their home country may feel the insufficient emotional support abroad. It may cause special loneliness and some frustration and anxiety in their daily-life situations. In fact, sense of fear to be ill abroad and feeling of away from home support may be a great source of lack of adaptation with others. However, in our research, both of single and married persons can make the adjustment in social affairs well according to the results. It may be because of the effective social affair service of this university and small social integration program such as

cultural trip, Chinese corner and sport competitions for international students. Therefore, if the international students feel lonely or some sense of worry or exclusion from any group, they can join in these groups provided by the university. In one of the studies about Cross-Cultural Adaptation of Foreign Students in Chinese University: based on Network of Social Support, frequently highlighted that foreign students mainly get help, comfort and care from family, same nationality students and different nationality students and less from Chinese friends and managers when they encounter difficulties in their daily life (Chaoping, et al. 2014). That is why they suggested that in the management system, the apartment buildings for foreign students should not establish separately and let bend into the school campus (Chaoping, et al. 2014). For health problems and language difficulties in some special places, they certainly need the host country's friends to face it successfully.

Moreover, whatever frequent language used in abroad country cannot be assumed that no impacts on resilience and cross-cultural adaptation. It doesn't matter whether they used their own language or English; they have good resilience and competent adaptation about their current surrounding in China. They can communicate their professors, lecturer and office staff with their English conveniently and it is the not case whether the interactive language is Chinese or English. It is found that there is also no significant correlation between resilience and cross-cultural adaptation among international students from this university.

There are some limitations for this research which are small sample size, cross-sectional design and quantitative research design. Further researches are suggested to do with large sample size to interpret with more findings from various aspects and to interview the suggestions about the international students' perception of Chinese University student service center and counseling program effectiveness to help the students' psychological problem and needs. For resilience, it should be conducted with the interviews or observation to investigate the more resilient people under stresses and adverse conditions. For cross-cultural adaptation, it should be conducted between ethnic groups, race and continent. In this current finding, it was found that no correlation between resilience and cross-cultural adaptation among international students and it may be because the participants were collected from only one university. It may be one of the limitations that can affect on correlation between these variables. However, our research may be the major forced one to implement the required programs and services for the international students' tertiary education in China and to take consideration about the difficulties and insufficient emotional conditions of various countries' scholars in China.

5. Conclusion

Hence, even though they seem to use the available resources such as Chinese friends, country-mates, senior students, dormitory manager and international student office, they still need to solve their psychological problems in the counseling center. According to our result, this may be the reason that in

spite of being enough resilience and cross-cultural adaptation for most of the international students, these two processes are not strongly correlated with each other. Growing and increasing international students in China, they also need to consider the best effective advices and directions to create the relevant host culture for supporting international students through the perfect knowledge of cross-cultural adaptation programs and resilience projects.

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