CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AS EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA

By

MOHAMED ABDULLAHI MOHAMED

Thesis submitted to

the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government,

Universiti Utara Malaysia,

In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in fulfilment of the requirements for a Post Graduate degree from the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), I agree that the Library of this university may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by my supervisor or in his absence, by the Dean of Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government where I did my thesis. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts of it for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Request for permission to copy or to make other use of materials in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

<div align="center">

Dean of Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government

Universiti Utara Malaysia

06010 UUM Sintok

Kedah Darul Aman

</div>

ABSTRACT

Expatriates and anyone who goes out of him country where the culture and the environment are different are likely to face culture shock that can affect the performance of the person. This study was carried out in order to find out the type of culture shock faced by international students in Malaysia, the way they adjust the challenges and strategies they use to adapt the host country' culture.

Face to face in-depth interview was conducted with twenty five international students who are currently registered as student in some of the Malaysia's public universities; the students come from seventeen different countries around the world. The collected data is analysed through qualitative content analyses method.

The findings of the study illustrate the type of culture shock faced by international students in Malaysia, the strategies they use to adjust culture shock issues. The study found that the common culture shock that international students in Malaysia face are, language, food, weather and integration with local people.

Keywords: Culture, Culture shock, Adjustment, adaptation, international students

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful, i would like to thank the Almighty Allah for giving me the health and the energy to complete my thesis. First and foremost, i would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Norhayati Bt. Zakaria for giving me her valuable time, encouragement, guidance, advice and knowledge. I am deeply grateful to her for being patient with me and helping me throughout my thesis.

I would also like to express my utmost thanks and appreciation to all my dearest family, who supported me morally, emotionally and financially, specially my lovely mother Dahabo who is the love my life; my dear father Abdullahi, my sweet grandmother Hajia Culuso Siyad; my dear uncle Hashi Mohamed, the hero that made me who i am today; and all my beloved siblings, Abbas, Abdulgafar, Abduljalil, Abdullahi, Abubakar, Ahmed, Aisha, Ayan, Bishara, Iman, Najma, Nurudin, Omar, Sumaya, Yasir, Yusuf, and Zahra.

Special thanks to my lovely cousin Nasteha and my best friend Abdalle who stood by my side through thick and thin.

Last but not least, i want thank my two princesses; my honourable wife Shukri for her love, care and help, and my adorable daughter Sara who is the light of my life, I love you both.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DATA ANALAYSIS

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

KL: **Kuala Lumpur**

MMU: **Multimedia University**

MOHE: **Ministry of Higher Education**

U.S: **United States**

UIAM: **Universiti Islam Antrabangsa Malaysia**

UM: **Universiti Malaya**

UNESCO: **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

UniMAP: **Universiti Malaysia Perlis**

UTeM: **Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka**

UUM: **Universiti Utara Malaysia**

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the study

Education in modern world became the key of every door, only those who are educated tend to succeed in life compare to the uneducated. A lot of people argue that the opportunities and the future are in the hands of only those who are educated. As a result, the demand of higher education is rapidly increasing, many knowledge seekers spend much time and wealth to pursue higher education in foreign countries that are completely differ from their own in terms of culture, language and way of living.

Modern world became like small village, and this simplifies the integration of global society. Expatriates who are pursuing life dreams cross global bounders from one country to another for the purpose of searching better opportunities. Multinational firms are playing a key role in cross cultural interaction between countries. However, It is not only business enterprises that create cross cultural interaction, but academic organizations are also enrolling many international students from different countries and offering knowledge and skills.

Almost in every country there are international students who came from other countries and live there to study. This does not mean foreign students in different countries are similar in number, because there are many factors that cause to have many foreign students in a particular country, and less in another country.   It is important to mention that some countries provide greater and more quality

knowledge, so as the number of the international students living and studying there are more compare to other countries. With speedy growth of internationalization of higher education, the academic institutions such as colleges and universities become international enterprises where students who come from diverse countries across the world get together to gain knowledge and skills (Richardson & McKenna, 2001).

The host countries that provide education service are also have economic and social benefit from the international students in their countries. International students in the respective countries contribute more economic benefits and create plenty of jobs for the local people through their tuition fees and living expenses like housing, health insurance and transportation. According to United States department of commerce, only in 2012/13 international students in U.S contributed over 24 billion dollars to the U.S economy.

Apart from the fact that foreign students are gaining knowledge in overseas, they are also having some difficulties regarding with cultural diversity. Students who pursue education in abroad are facing challenges, either the culture of the society in that particular country, language, education system or even weather conditions. The combination of all those factors can cause to the students a cultural shock which can influence their academic performance, and sometimes can lead them to fail their educational goals.

Several studies about expatriates stated that expatriates go through challenges such as language, food, environment, dealing with local people and things related with both work and non-work (Young-Chul, 1996; Lueke & Svyantek, 2000; & Aycan, 1997).

Nevertheless, Malaysia is fast becoming and education centre attracting many students from Africa, Asia and middle east, it is one of the education destinations of many international students from across the world, each of those students who arrived Malaysia to study have different culture, religion, norms and values. All those diverse things are serious issues that students have to deal with in order to achieve their goals.

In the early stages of international students' life in Malaysia, students face obvious challenges that they have to deal with and try to adapt the environment and the life style. Many international students in Malaysia encounter cultural adjustment challenges. A study conducted by Lin and Yi (1997) stated that numerous foreign students showed signs of depression, which resulted from low motivation and less concentration on social life and academic study.

However, foreign students in Malaysia can use some strategies to tackle with diversity and adapt the life style of Malaysia. Mingling with local people and advice from professors can be helpful to adapt Malaysian culture. Past studies such as Bandura (1977) proposed that good communication with peers in academic settings, professors, and interactions with local people are important tools to succeed the adjustment of overseas students in host country culture.

Like any other country, International Students as expatriates in Malaysia have to overcome all the obstacles to fulfil their dreams by undergoing all the adjustment processes. Ang & Liamputtong (2007) stated international students who are willing to study in overseas should come up with an ideal preparation to tackle with cultural diversity challenges in the host country they are studying in and make adjustment in order to settle and adapt with local norms and values.

1.2   Problem statement

Malaysia is turning to a popular education destination, there are plenty of public and private institutions that offer various faculties, this service attracted many foreign students to adore studying in Malaysia. According to (UNESCO, 2010), Malaysia has managed to capture a 2% market of international students in the fast growing private education sector.

However, those students who came to Malaysia and registered in local education institutions came from different countries over the world, Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia and America. According to Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE, 2010), Malaysia has already students population of more than 70,000 from many different countries. Malaysia's market share for international students was ranked 11th in the word as a destination among international students.

Each and everyone has his own culture, they face many cultural shock challenges in which they struggle to adjust. In order for them to adapt Malaysia's life and overall system they have to adjust their culture and come up with a strategy to tackle with problems that resulting from culture shock. The process of tackling with cultural differences, stress and homesickness is called cultural adjustment; there are many stages that involve in this process, such as honeymoon stage, culture shock, adjustment and adaption. There are few studies that covered about the problem in detail.

This paper will study the cultural adjustment process in which students go through, it will explain more on the type of culture shock faced by the students, the

adjustment process and strategies use by students to adapt the new environment both the education system and the lifestyle.

1.3   Objective of the research

After problem statement has been identified, a set of research objectives are formulated here to expose the main goal of the study. The research objectives are:

1) To identify the cultural challenges faced by international students in Malaysia

2) To explain the type of culture shock international students face

3) To describe the basic factors that help students to settle and make cultural adjustment

4) To illustrate the way international students adjust their cultural shock and adapt new environment

1.4   Research Questions

The flowing questions will be addressed in this study:

1) What type of cultural shock do International students in Malaysia face?

2) How international students in Malaysia cope with cultural shock?

3) Are there strategies to use in order to avoid cultural shock impact?

4) How students make cultural adjustment?

5) How does things they are common with Malaysian culture helps to adapt?

1.5   Significance of the study

There is no doubt that international students in Malaysia faced some challenges related with culture shock, but it may not effected them equally due to the cultural similarities that some international students share with Malaysia, religion is a notable factor that simplify some international students to adapt Malaysian culture. Islam which is the official religion of Malaysia is crucial for international Muslim students who study in Malaysia, because it will help them settle as they can feel home due to the Islamic culture that they are familiar with.

This study is significant for several reasons. It will help International students who are willing to study in Malaysia in the future, as it gives students guidelines and true picture of what their seniors went through. The study covers the challenges faced by the international students, the way they tackle it, and the strategies they use to adjust; a combination of all these things will help them to find out the true path of cultural adjustment. They can also get sufficient information that will help them to settle and succeed their academic goals here in Malaysia.

Many international students are suffering from the cultural differences between their own heritage and Malaysia, as the result, they come across many challenges including stress, depression and anxiety, this study will help them understand how to make cultural adjustment when studying in Malaysia. In this study students can learn the likes of the cultural diversity, the probable cultural shock they can face, and how to make an adjustment in order to fulfil their educational goals.

Based on the findings of this study, future researchers will be able to refer to this study, it will help them get clear explanation of the possible cultural shock that expatriates and intentional students may face if they come to Malaysia. The finding of the study might be valuable tool for future researchers; it will also provide some contributions in the field of cross cultural adjustment.

1.6   Scope of the study

The aim of the study was to understand deeply the type of culture shock faced by international students in Malaysia, the way it affects their academic performances, the strategies they use to cope with culture shock, and overall adjustment process. To get quality data, face to face in-depth interview has been conducted with some international students who are registered under six Malaysian public universities.

The participants of this study were International students who are studying in Malaysia, and the data used were gathered through face to face interview. Twenty five students from seventeen different countries who study in six different Public Universities of Malaysia have been interviewed.

As the primary data collection of the study is interview, it's difficult to conduct an interview with large number of students, due to lack of sufficient time, but instead the researcher tried to target student from different countries and continents trying to get diverse data from different cultural background. Majority of the interviewed students are came from the countries who have big culture gap with Malaysia, because they face more culture differences compare to other students who came from countries that have similar culture with Malaysia.

1.7   Limitations of the study

In this study, there are some limitations that need to be stressed, one significant limitation is that the findings of this study cannot be generalized; the participants of the study were number of international students that have been interviewed, so it may not be suitable to generalize the result of the study into big number of population.

Participants of the study are twenty five international students from six Malaysian public universities. The result would be effective if the number of the students were more than this, and the institutions as well.

1.8   Summary

This chapter discussed some of the main elements of the study; the background of the study has been explained well by covering some related previous studies, and also explaining the areas that will be discussed in this study. The problems statement of the study was widely described and the major factors of the problem that study want to discover was also clarified. The objective of the study was identified in this chapter and also the research questions that will be the base of the study were discussed.

The significance of the study was discussed while scope of the study has been explained. Also, this chapter covered the limitation or the drawbacks of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter discussed the key terms of the research. A general introduction on expatriates, culture, culture shock, cultural adjustment and adaptation will be given in order to highlight the possible areas of contribution for this study.

2.2   Expatriates

The word expatriate will be defined first before explaining the cultural challenges they face in overseas. The word expatriate referring to an employee that has been sent by his or her employers into a foreign country in order to manage operations in that country (Noe 2006, p.641). Plenty of researchers conducted investigations on expatriate and how they adjust in the foreign courtiers they operate in. Huang (2005) define expatriate adjustment as a process in which expatriates feel comfortable with the new surrounding environment and adapts to it. Development of expatriate employees became crucial to the multinational firms in past few decades (Adler, 2008; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2003; Javidan & House, 2011; Mendenhal, 2006; Mezias & Scandura, 2005; Tung, 1987). The number of expatriates who cross international borders for international assignments increased in last half of 20th century (Black & Gregerson, 1997). Multinational firms send their workers into international assignment in foreign countries to apply organization's knowledge transfer, culture change, and control overseas systems (Feldman & Thomas, 1992;

Kamoche, 2000). When expatriates arrive in the foreign country of their assignment, they encounter with huge personal and professional challenges (Crocitto et. al., 2005, p.528).

Expatriates succeed or fail in their international assignments, the successful expatriates are those who remain in host country during their assignments, accomplish high level of adjustment to the new environment in the host country, achieve high degree of effectiveness in completing the assignment, and also accomplish high level of personal adjustment (Bennett, Aston, Colquhoun, 2000).

Expatriates face many challenges in the host country, but few companies offer cross cultural training that will facilitate for them to adapt the host country's culture (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). It has been revealed that between 16 and 40% of entire expatriates end their international assignments earlier than expected due to inability to adjust and adapt to the foreign culture and poor performance (Black, 1998). To reduce the challenges faced by the expatriates and avoid the failure on their assignments it is important to create three strategic actions that can develop effective expatriate management. First one is to select the right people to work as expatriates in overseas. Second is preparation before selection, it's necessary to prepare the selected works in order to face overseas' challenges. The last one is to prepare return policy for expatriates when they come back to their home (Chew, 2004). Similarly, Caligiuri, Lazarova, and Tarique (2005) revealed that cross cultural training is useful for expatriates as it will help them to work and live in the host country comfortably, it strength their ability to appreciate different cultural perspectives and enhance their adjustment.

2.3   Culture

Many scholars defined culture in different ways; culture affects everything people do in their society because of the different values, ideas and attitudes. Culture is not inherited, and it cannot be existed by its own. It is a shared behaviour by members of a particular society (Hall 1976, p. 16). Culture can be described as a set of values, beliefs and long-term meaning that explain, race, ethnic, or other groups and learn about their behaviour (Mulholland 1991).

Culture is referring to beliefs, values and behaviours where a particular society lives in. Ralph Linton (1949) labelled culture as the total of attitudes, knowledge and habitual behaviour patterns shared which spread by the members of a society. It is the way of life of the people and how they express their feelings and the bodily actions they do to explain certain things.

It seems that most of the scholars who studied about culture mentioned the beliefs and values as the root of the culture. According to Geertz (1957), culture is set of beliefs, values and expressive symbols, and in terms of which individuals identify their feelings and make their judgement. Hofstede (1980) defines culture as the combined factors that differentiate the members of one group of society from another which is inherited from generation to generation, it fixed as it changes all the time because each generation modify and add something of its own. Aldous Huxley (1984-1963) revealed culture as an amount of specific knowledge that gather in any large family and it's the general belongings of all its members.

There are two patterns of culture, explicit and implicit for behaviour that transmitted through symbols, the important core of culture consist of traditional

ideas that historically derived and selected and their attached values, culture systems can be considered as a result of action as conditional elements of future action (Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952: 181; Adler 1997: 14). Culture is set of basic values, assumptions, beliefs, policies, orientations to life, behavioural conventions and procedures shared by group of people in which influence the behaviour of each members interpretations of other people's behaviour (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 3).

Culture influences on the way people communicate each other and how they negotiate business. Varner and Palmer (2006) define culture as socially transmitted behaviours, beliefs and values shared by a group of people.

2.4   Culture shock

Culture shock has been defined in many different ways by both people who experienced the culture shock and by scholars who conducted research to discover more about it. Pedersen (1995, 1) defined it as the process of initial adjustment to a strange environment. Similarly, Adler (1975) stated that culture shock is mainly emotional reactions that resulted new different cultural stimuli that has no meaning for one's own culture, and to the misinterpretation of strange and different experiences. It can encompass feelings of irritability, helplessness and worries of being contaminated, injured disregarded, or cheated.

Berg (1960) illustrated that culture shock is the anxiety and disorientation in which sojourners experience in cultural transition. It the manner in which immigrants adapt to the new culture such as customs, language, and norms. While undergoing the likes of psychological discomfort, anxiety and irritability occur. Bama (1983)

revealed specific cause of stress research literature which was established as the primary stressors: uncertainty, unpredictability, and ambiguity that explain how these factors related with the experiences of the person who go into a new culture.

Culture shock is described as the impact of moving from a familiar environment where culture and value as normal and the person feels belonging and normal to another culture which is unfamiliar where things and way of life are completely different. It usually affects people who travel abroad either working purpose, academic or even living in the foreign country.

One of the major things that expatriates suffer is homesickness. It feels difficult to be separated from beloved ones and home country, when the homesickness starts, there are some other elements that effect the person who live in abroad; they face challenges to adapt the weather, language, food and social life, combination of all those things can cause unrest and discomfort to the foreigners no matter what purpose they come to the host country.

The impact of culture shock has different levels, it depends how people cope with it. Some of the expatriates cope with the diverse environment properly so they succeed their assignments, while some other fail to adapt that causes failure to the assignments or purpose they came to the foreign country.

Culture shock affects people differently; it depends on where people come from, and also the degree of stress differs for adjustment to the new culture (Pantelidou & Craig, 2006). Marx (1999) suggested working with new cultural environment can result a range of reactions such as anxiety, confusion, isolation, depression and frustration. The new environment that is different from what the

person use to is the condition that causes culture shock that may bring feelings of discomfort, helplessness, embarrassment, confusion and homesickness about the person's identity (Oberg, 1960; Bennett, 1998; McLachlan and Justice, 2009).

Many scholars studied about the cultural shock, some of them identified stage and phases of cultural shock. Klopf (1995) classified culture shock into six stages which are preliminary, spectator, participation, shock, adjustment, and re-entry. The first stage which is preliminary is when people started to get ready heading to overseas which makes them feel excited, in this stage they show pleasure to go abroad. Second stage is spectator which also known as honeymoon, it is when people arrive in new country and fall in love with surroundings like the food, lifestyle and everything about the new country. The third stage is participation stage which means the end of spectator stage; it is the beginning of learning the language, getting along with new cultural environment and dealing with the new challenges. The fourth stage is the shock stage where the loneliness and negative feelings starts that makes the daily live and tasks complicated. They fifth one is the adjustment, the person starts to set up a relationship with local people, the sense of being part of the new environment begins followed by identification of with new culture. The sixth stage is re-entry stage; when the individuals adapt the culture of the host country, they turn to bicultural. When they go back to their home country, they may go through a kind of culture shock; they may experience a sense of stress and discomfort, this time in their native home that will take several months to adapt.

Several research studies about expatriates have shown that expatriates suffer from changes like food, language, working and living environment, dealing with people and things related with work and non-work (Aycan, 1997; Lueke & Svyantek,

14

2000; & Young-Chul, 1996). Miller (1986) proposed ten causes of culture shock: Climate, dressing code, language, education, eating habit, infrastructure, religious beliefs, family life, entertainment, and courtship. This study mainly focuses on four factors that cause culture shock to international students and to expatriates at large.

- ➢ Language
- ➢ Food
- ➢ Weather
- ➢ Social integration

2.5   Culture Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is the changes made by the individuals to create relationship and connection with the host society (Gabel, Dolen & Cerdin, 2005). Cultural adjustment is referring to the degree in which an immigrant is comfortable with psychologically in different aspect of the host country (Black, 1988). It is related with reduction of uncertainty by trying to adapt or learning the behaviours and norms of local culture (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). Adjustment can be divided into two basic ways. The first one is the level of psychological adjustment which the individual is familiar with or the level of psychological comfort that individual get from the new surroundings (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Cultural adjustment involves the method of integrating behaviours, understanding, beliefs and values of the host culture in the side of one's culture of origin (Constantine, Okazaki & Utsey, 2004).

15

Like any other challenges, culture shock must be adjusted to move on and continue the purpose of coming to a foreign country. Either the individual is academic expatriate, visitor or working in the foreign country permanently, the most important thing is to adapt the host nation's culture as it's the key of the success or failure of the expatriate.

Being patient and using suitable strategies to cope with the host culture are highly mentioned when it comes to adapting with foreign culture. To adjust and adapt different culture takes time, patient, and suitable strategies to deal with the new challenges. Lynch (1992) revealed that cultural adjustment is a challenge to immigrant people who live in the host country, as they try to learn the language and understand the environment while dealing with adaptation issues like creating a sense of identity, mingling with others, assimilating to the new culture and learning new role.

Ward and Kennedy (1999) argued that socio-cultural adaptation is evaluated in terms of having skills or the perception of social difficulties in the host culture. This evaluation may rely on behavioural description, recent measures of socio-cultural adaptation that focused on the perception of social difficulties. Cultural adaptation is generally predicted by some factors that simplify cultural learning, such as specific knowledge of culture, level of interaction and identification with the host culture, cultural similarity or distance, language, and period of residence (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993a, 1993b).

According to Black and Stephens (1989), there are three areas of cross cultural adjustment. First one is general environment, which means the level of living comfortably with general conditions, such as food, and health facilities. The

second area is interacting with society of the host country which is how the individual interact with the society of the host country. The third area is working adjustment such as performance levels, responsibilities, and job, which means how the person adjust to perform work duties, and act responsible in his/her assignments.

Adjustment is very important for all expatiates; they need to adjust their behaviour to rules and norms of the host country. Success their international assignments depend on how well they adapt to the host country. Failure to adapt and adjust with the host culture will lead to return home before they complete their international assignments (Harzing, 1995). Successful adjustment will bring integration of expatriates' original culture with the host nation's culture (Kim & Ruben, 1988).

2.6   Acculturation

The concept of acculturation is defined by many different scholars. Acculturation is the course of learning and adapting to different culture from the original one which the individual belong to (Ownbey & Horridge, 1997). According to Kottak (2007), acculturation is cultural changes that arise when group of individuals with different culture have constant direct contact; their original culture could be changed, but they remain different.

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) described acculturation as the experiences that results when group of individuals with different culture come together into continuous direct contact through changes in their original culture either one or both groups.

One of the most cited definition of acculturation provided by the Social Science Research Council (1954, p.974). It defines culture as the cultural changes that results from the combination of two or more different cultural systems. Berry (1980) revealed that acculturation is an element of cultural diversity and global immigration which immigrant people bring some characteristics of their native country's culture while they are adapting to the new cultural attitudes and behaviours. It is the process undergo by those who new to the society in order to adapt the values, attitudes and behaviours of the dominant host culture (O'Guinn, Imperia & MacAdams, 1987). Acculturation can also be defined as the cultural transmission which experienced by people due to their direct contact with others (Berry et al., 1992).

Everyone doesn't undergo acculturation process in his own way. All individuals don not experience acculturation in the same way, the way people undergo acculturation is widely different, and also the way they deal it is not same, these differences known as acculturation strategies (Berry, 1980). Sam (2006) argued that acculturation is referring to behavioural adaptation, and it can be classified into two; long-term acculturation outcome and short-term acculturation outcomes.

Berry (1980) describes acculturation as a process of the three phases which are contact, conflict and adaption. The first phase which is contact starts when an individual is open to a different culture. The conflict which is the second phase occurs when the people of host country and the immigrants try to reject or accept one another. The final phase arises when immigrants adapt to the host countries positively or negatively.

Kim (1979) revealed that humans show the quality of adaptation as an open system. The immigrants acculturate themselves successfully to the level that they learn to code and decode messages in a manner that they will be accepted, recognized and responded to by the group or individual they interact. Johnston (1963) differentiated the acculturation into two aspects, the behavioural that he stated as external assimilation and the attitudinal aspect called internal assimilation.

Berry (1987) came up with acculturation model by differentiating it into four adaptation strategies which are namely Assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. The first strategy assimilation is related with rejecting one's cultural values in attempt to be part of the major cultural practices. Integration is maintaining one's cultural identity and joining the dominance culture's values and norms at the same time. Separation is referring to the strategy of valuing the culture and norms of others and not involving the cultural values of the dominant culture. The last strategy, Marginalization is referring to the adaptation strategy that one does not participate in other's own culture or the dominant group's culture.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

Research is a systematic investigation that describes, control, predict and explain the observed phenomenon (Babbie, 1998). It is used to collect and analyze information in order to increase human understanding of a particular topic or issue. It contains three different steps. Pose a question, collect data to answer the question, and present an answer of the question (Creswell, J. W, 2009).

This chapter presents the methodology that has been used for the study; the chapter will focus on the research design, data collection, and also sources of the data that has been used in the research. The data analysis will elaborate all sorts of resources.

3.2   Research design

According to Kerlinger (1986), research design is the strategy, plan, and structure of investigation conceived in order to get answers for research questions and control variance. It is the specification of procedures and methods for obtaining the needed information. It is the overall operational framework of the study that specify the necessary information to be collected, the suitable place to collected and the procedures to be used (Green and Tull, 1996).

In this is study, Qualitative in-depth interview method was used for data collection because of two major reasons. First, this method allows participants to explain their experiences of cross cultural adjustment as much as possible. Secondly, it makes easy for the researchers to obtain the information need to make the study rich and detailed. According to Rossman and Ralllis (1998), in-depth interview facilitate researchers to conduct guided conversation with a goal of obtaining rich and detailed information.

Qualitative research is the process of understanding human or social related matters based on holistic picture formed with words, reporting comprehensive ideas of informants conducted in a natural setting (Cresswell, 1994; Shelmerdine, 2011). The goal of the qualitative research is to provide details and interpretations of fact in order to modify understanding of it (Shelmerdine,2011).

Qualitative research contains material practices and set of interpretive that make the world visible. They transform a series of representations including interviews, conversations, filed notes, memos and recording to the self; this means qualitative researchers learn things in a natural ways by attempting to make sense or interpret situations in terms of the meanings people bring (Denzin & Lincoln, 2004, p.3). Qualitative research developed the science in human and social to the ideas that human can be studies the same way as objects (Minichiello & Kottler, 2010).

The objective of qualitative research is the progress of concepts that helps to understand the social phenomena situation, experience, and views of all the participants. (Pope & Mays, 1995, p.43)

3.2.1 Primary Data

Kothari (1985) defined primary data as the original information that is collected for the first time. It is the data that has been collected directly from first hand by the researcher using his/her own efforts; it is obtained through observation, surveys or interviews. Similarly, Audrey (1989: 57) revealed that primary data directly comes from the population the research is researching, thus the researcher able to access and collect the information directly. However, this study uses primary data collection which is an interview, especially in-depth interview. The author sits with participants and had in-depth conversations with them in order to get related and reliable information.

3.3   Data collection

The data that has been used in this was primary data. The primary data referring to the information which is obtained directly from first hand sources via means of observation, surveys or experiment using own efforts.

An interview has been conducted with 25 international students who are studying in Malaysian Universities. To get different information that based on cultural diversity, an interview is conducted with students from seventeen different

countries across the world. The interview with the students was done in English language and it took place in five Malaysian public Universities.

The research collected all necessary information about culture, culture shock, and cultural adjustment, in order to fully demonstrate international students in Malaysia's cultural adaptation difficulties and adjustment process.

In order to answer the research questions and find related information, students are asked more about the elements of culture, culture shock and culture adjustment. Since the study uses in-depth interview method, the interview was more like conversation.

3.3.1 Interview

Kahn and Cannell (1957) describe interview as a conversation with purpose. Thus, to achieve the goal of this study, an interview has been conducted among selected international students who are currently studying in Malaysia. In this research, author conducted an in-depth interview with twenty five international students who are registered under six Malaysian public Universities, namely Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP), Multimedia University, Univrsiti Malaya, and Univeristi Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM).

The interviewed students are from Africa, Asia and Middle East. International students from countries who have big cultural gap with Malaysian were the target as they suffer the cultural shock more compare to those who came from

neighbour countries, but some of students from neighbouring countries are also interviewed in order to find out in case there are some cultural challenges they faced.

Table 3.1 Participants' country of origin

Original countries of the students		
No	Country	Quantity
1	BANGLADESH	1
2	CAMEROON	1
3	EGYPT	2
4	ERITREA	1
5	INDONESIA	2
6	JORDAN	1
7	LIBYA	1
8	NIGERIA	2
9	PALESTINE	2
10	PAKISTAN	1
11	SAUDI ARABIA	1
12	SOMALIA	2
13	SRI-LANKA	1
14	SUDAN	1
15	SYRIA	2
16	UZBEKISTAN	2
17	YEMEN	2

Table 3.1 indicates the number of the interviewed students, and their countries of origin.

Table 3.2: Interviewees' Universities

No	Name of the University	Number of students
1	Multimedia University (MMU)	1
2	Universiti Islam Antrabangsa Malaysia (UIAM)	4
3	Universiti Malaya (UM)	5
4	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	6
5	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	1
6	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	8

Table 3.2 illustrates the different universities whereby interviewees' study in.

However, to get the true view of the students and depth understanding about the study, the author allocated enough time to sit with and spend time with each and every student, the interview took place in the campus of respective Universities. The interview carried out using recording tape material, in order to save the exact information provided by the students, so student's opinions and ideas can be cited when writing the report exactly as they said without paraphrasing.

Researchers who conduct Qualitative research are those who interest to learn more about the meaning that people have made, which is how human make sense of their world and also the experiences they have in the world. (Merriam, 2009, p. 13)

Most of the respondents are selected students from countries that have big different culture with Malaysia, because those students are more likely to face cultural shock in terms of food, weather, and education system..

As the interview is recorded, there were also notes that used during the interview. After the completion of the interview, it is transcribed the entire interviews in order to highlight the important ideas mentioned by the students when they were interviewed. Once the data collection and transcribing process completed, the qualitative data analyser software Nvivo was used to analyze and organize the structured information in order to make a better decision.

3.4   Data analysis

This study uses qualitative data analysis. According to Bogdan and Bklen (1982), qualitative data analysis is organizing data, synthesizing it, working with it, classifying it into manageable and meaningful parts, searching for what is important that must be learned. Qualitative data is a wide different passages or segments; it's hard to provide meaning information to the readers or to the researchers. It needs to be reduced in order to organize the important patters of the data (Mertler, 2006).

This study adapts qualitative content analyse method. In order to understand the culture shock faced by international students in Malaysia, the adjustment process and the strategies they use to adapt Malaysian culture the study uses content analyse method.

3.5   Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research design, the type of data that has been used for the study, the data collection method, and a variety of data analysing

techniques. It also reviews they type of data collection as it describes the interview method that has been used for data collection.

The methodology of the study has been discussed briefly by stating each and every step of the data collection and data analysis. Data analysing techniques used by the researcher were also illustrated.

However, the participants of the research are also discussed; the interviewed students who were twenty five international students who registered under six Malaysian public universities are also discussed in order to clarify their respective countries of origin. The chapter also discussed the geographical areas that the interviewed international students come from such us the continents, and sub continents followed by the respective universities they are studying in now.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DATA ANALAYSIS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter discusses the analysis and the discussion of the study. The study is conducted in order to find out the cultural adjustment of international students in Malaysia,, it covers the process of adjustment by starting the definition of culture based on international students in Malaysia's view, the causes and type of cultural shock they face, the strategies they use in order to cope the cultural diversity, and overall adaptation process undergo by international students.

In order to answer the research questions and reach the objectives of this research, all collected data was analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Content analysis referring to the method of analysing and examining the content of the qualitative data in order to find common themes and understand what the information means to the people; this kind of process is used for the purpose of making valid inferences from text (Krippendorff, 2004).

The findings of the study are divided into major parts, biography of the interviewed students, definition of culture, they types and causes of culture shock, process of adjustment, and adaptation. All these areas will be discussed briefly in the chapter.

4.2 Demography of respondents

This part explains the demography of interviewees, such as their country of origin, education level, and their respective universities.

4.2.1 Country of origin

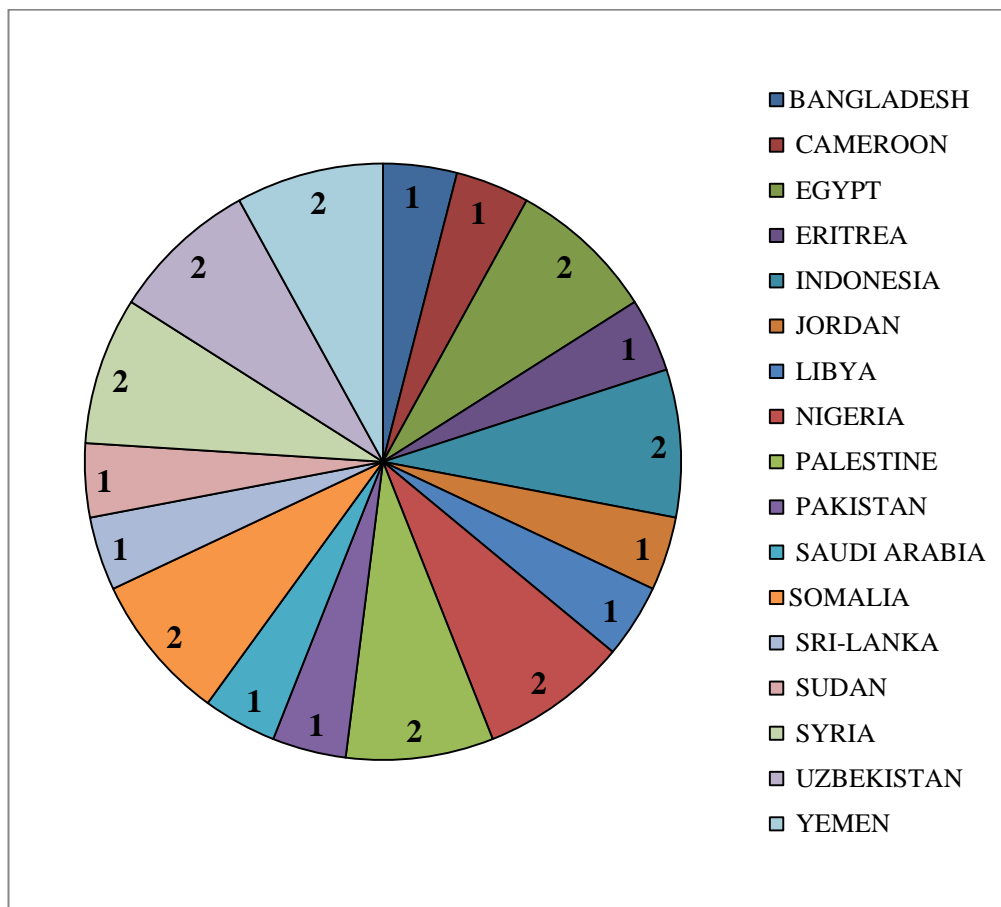Figure 4.1: Participants' country of origin

Figure 4.1 shows the number and the origin countries of the interviewed students. An interview was conducted with twenty five international students from seventeen different countries. This pie chart graph shows the original countries of the interviewed student. Twenty five students from seventeen different countries have been interviewed in order to find out their cultural diversity experience in Malaysia.

4.2.2 Education level

Figure 4.2: Participants' Education level
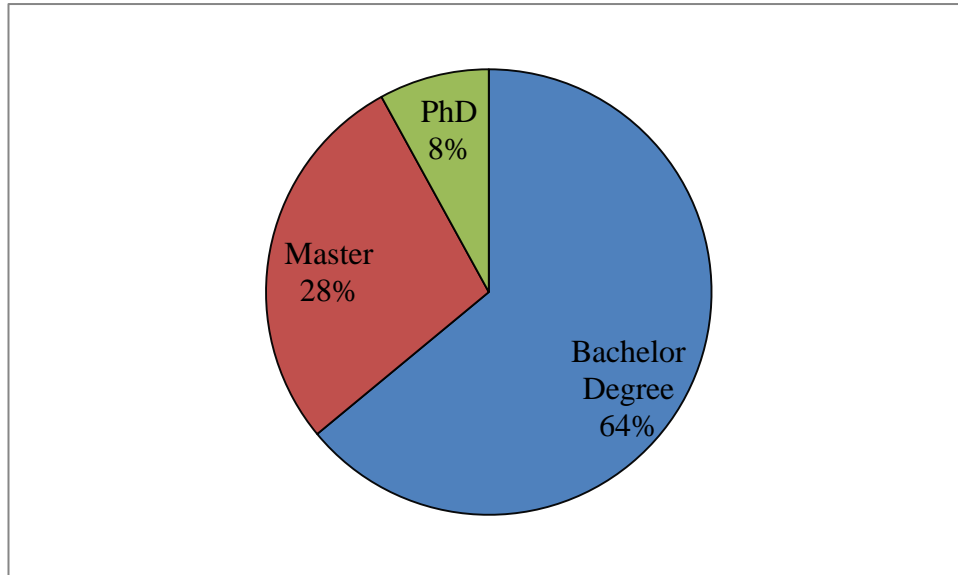
The interviewed students were pursuing three different levels of education which are Bachelor degree, master and PhD. The primary target was to conduct an interview with students who live in Malaysia in a period of one to two years, because those who stay longer may not remember the culture shock they faced as they look adapted, while those who stay in Malaysia in short time could not provide the required information as they are still in their early stages of culture adjustment process; in this regard, the number of undergraduate interviewees is larger than postgraduate students, because it is easy to find them, as they are greater number compare to the postgraduate students in universities.

4.2.3 Interviewees' Universities
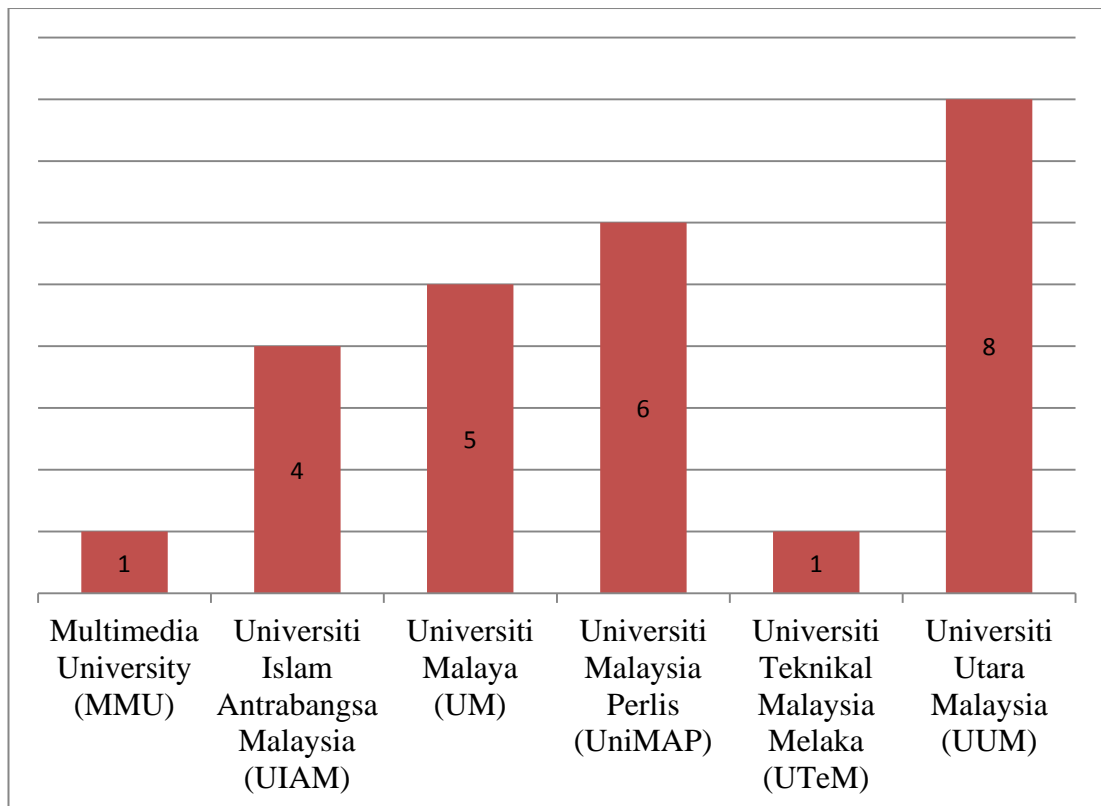
Figure 4.3: Interviewees' Universities

Figure 4.3 explains the interviewees' universities. The data of this study was collected from international students who study in six different public universities. The listed Universities are located in five Malaysian different states which are; Melaka, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Kedah, and Perlis.

4.3   Definition of culture

The interviewed students have different perceptions on definition of culture. Some of them described it as a way of life, they believe culture affects every aspect of human life; some others argued that culture is a symbol that classify a particular society from another, while some others called it as traditional behaviour in which human inherits from their respective grandparents.

Most of the interviewed students defined culture similarly, particularly cultural diversity perspective, they didn't use same words but the way they defined and some of the terms they use to define culture are same.

> "What i think about culture is simply the way of living, the way people live, the concepts, the behaviour of people how they understand or perceive things, it might be separate from different countries, in our country to other countries the culture is different which means the way of living of people is different one another (Hassan, Palestine).

> "Culture i think is something which every human being has which is different and unique other people life, something which people have for themselves" (Hamid, Pakistan).

> "Culture is very related to the country and of course it's related to the location, and every location every country has different culture which is very unique" (Anisa, Indonesia).

> "Culture actually is one quality which is unique to each and every ethnic group, people, and every tribe such as African tribes, religion or country" (Ali, Cameroon).

> "To me culture represents the way people live their lives, the practices, the way they interact each other, traditions. All these little things that make us different from each other in the way we behave" (Bilkis, Sri lanka).

Majority of these students mentioned about the cultural diversity among global society, the uniqueness of culture, and the cultural gap between two different

societies. Some of them used country when they want to show cultural differences between two different cultures, though it is obvious that there countries that have multiple different cultures, and countries who have similar culture with others, but their point was to clarify the cultural differences.

Apart from the general definition of culture, there are other students who have different opinion when it comes to culture definition. Some students stated that culture influenced by religious believes, and people tend to concern and stick to the religion more than the culture. They believe that all their actions and behaviours influenced by the religion. They argued that wearing such dresses or doing such things is not culture, but religious orders.

"For me culture is related to religion, the area you live either South, West, Middle, i think culture is more respect after the religion, i respect the religion first then culture number two, culture should be respected everywhere. When you look at Muslim countries more of our culture is based Islam, even the traditional dress for women and for guys, so the religion influences the culture" (Idriss, Eritrea).

"I am from Jordan we have Islamic culture and we also have Arab culture depend on Arab traditional. First culture is Islamic, the woman and the men are different you must separate and all woman wear cover and in general we flow the Islam" (Tareq, Jordan).

4.4   Culture shock

Culture shock is a process that occurs in many different levels, as the individual interacts with different environment; either becomes stronger or weaker as the person learns the culture and copes or fails (Pedersen, 1995). Hence, international students in Malaysia experience culture shock, the level of its effects to students is different due to other factors, but majority of them face challenges at their

first arrival. There are several types of culture shock experienced by international students in Malaysia in general; what makes shock to a particular student could be normal to another, but this study will address some common cultural challenges faced by international students in Malaysia.

4.4.1 Types and causes of culture shock

The participants of the study experienced different types of culture shock in their early time in Malaysia, not all of them faced same culture shock, but here are some common culture shock faced by international students in Malaysia.

4.4.1.1   Language

The Language barrier between local people and international students is significant challenge that makes sense when it comes to cultural adjustment of international students in Malaysia. Some of the major Malaysian public universities are located states of the country from peninsular Malaysia to Sabah & Sarawak; therefore international students must communicate with local people in the state they live in to survive as they should buy food from restaurants, go shopping and so on. The challenges occur at this point due to local people's inability to speak proper English language, and international students' inability to speak Malaysian language.

> "In general it is hard to go with local, i do not know maybe they don't like to speak English, because i know when i go with them they want to go with me, but the problem with the language, they don't like to speak in English" (Hashim, Syria).

> "Malaysians are friendly, but they afraid of us because of the language, they can't speak English" (Ahmed, Egypt).

"It's nice to interact with the locals, but the locals look shy to talk to the internationals, first time you want to talk to them, they don't want to respond because of lack of English or lack of communication, so how would you gain something from someone that is not willing to converse with you?" (Victor, Nigeria).

"It took me 6 months to interact with local people because i could never understand, i think the problem is mostly the language so as long they don't know English and i don't know Malay, that is the biggest problem; we don't have anything in common to talk about because if we can't understand each other i don't think there will be away to interact with the people" (Sharif, Somalia).

"Actually the difficult thing to adapt is the language, here is hard specially when you go out of KL its hard to find someone who can speak English, so this is the main difficult here" (Hashim, Syria).

4.4.1.2   Food

One of the main culture shock issues faced by international students is food. Almost all students faced culture shock when it comes to food perspective; some of them could not eat Malaysian food due to the ingredients of the food, some others were suffering cooking process, while some others complained lack of options as Malaysian's main food is rice.

Spicy and sweetness are two ingredients whereby some international students suffer a lot. Majority of the Middle Eastern students that participated in this study and other nationalities complain about the spicy or chilli peppers also.

"The basic thing is the spicy they use, it is very hot and killing my tongue, so actually i try to manage but i couldn't so i choose some food that doesn't have spices and also i was make a deal with the one who do cooking...For God sake a little bit...so not too much" (Hashim, Syria).

"I can say so first about the food, mostly the food is spicy and in my country we are not used to eat spicy, so I wasn't able to get along with it" (Salah, Egypt).

Students do not like spicy because they cannot eat spicy food as they did not grow up eating or never eat, but there are other factors that they do not like spicy. The spicy food may cause sickness to those who suffering gastric pain. Some of them are hospitalised for eating spicy food and Doctors advised them to avoid.

"It caused me gastric actually eating this spicy food, i had to see doctor about my gastric, they had to put in operation, i had very difficult moment about the food and it was really so painful because the food i used to eat was different, everything was different, i had to see doctor and the doctor told me i have to stop eating spicy food, so i have to start eating none spicy food which is really very rare and difficult to find in Malaysia" (Sharif, Somalia).

There are some other students who found it difficult to eat rice always; they complain lack of variety options, as they said majority of local restaurants prepare rice for almost all time.

"The food is totally different. Malaysia they eat only rice, for my country we have different food for three different times of eating, for example breakfast we have bread with honey and cheese, for lunch we have rice with chicken and fish and beef, for dinner chapatti same like Indian food not heavy food" (Abdalla, Yemen).

"I saw people eat rice in the morning, this is big different. In our country there is different food, everything different in the first time, I have shock but after few months I try to interact with the people and I eat, no problem" (Tareq, Jordan).

4.4.1.3 Weather

Weather is also another issue, but it does not affect all students as some international students come from tropical countries with are hot climate, but those who come from cold weather countries and countries who have four seasons faced challenges to adapt Malaysian climate.

> "Actually i came from Palestine, the weather in Palestine we have four seasons. Malaysia i think one season or two seasons like that hot and super hot that made me angry or annoy, i don't like the hot weather because in Palestine like the maximum degrees like 25, 20 and that good for me, when i came to Malaysia i feel very hot, actually i don't like hot weather, actually the first six months in Malaysia its difficult, but after that it is ok" (Salem, Palestine).

> "We have four seasons and all the things and, we don't have that sunny weather" (Hashim, Syria).

> "The weather is big different because there is raining and very hot just, I think Malaysia is one season, but in Jordan there is four season" (Tareq, Jordan).

> "The weather is not good here, the weather in my country is much better because here all the time the weather is same it's hot only" (Hamid, Pakistan).

4.4.1.4 Social integration

Some students face difficulties when it comes to interacting with local people. This factor influenced by other factors such as language barriers. Some students complain about the beginning of integration, they stated that it is rare to see local people communicating with foreigners at first, though they revealed that locals are welcoming when they communicate and talk to them.

37

"We have been told here people are not open to any culture, they just close you need to try and try hard so they can be your friends, still trying i have some of them but not as many as i thought and am still trying" (Omar, Sudan).

"..I don't know in other states, but here in Perlis its quite hard mix with local, so we always can see there is always problem to mix with international and local even though local comes from KL, even they come from Penang, still hard to integrate and to mix with them, so mostly here it makes really hard" (Kurbanov, Uzbekistan).

"In Malaysia as i told you before they don't want to communicate with other, the issue with me i want to learn more about Malaysia, i didn't find that friend even i have a friend ten or eleven since i came to Malaysia" (Idriss, Eritrea).

International students also complain about local society, especially local students' lack of staying in touch. They revealed that when they meet with local friends at university, particularly classmates in which they had great times, but by the time that class finishes, the relationship will not last anymore, because locals will not keep in touch as they said.

"If you have Malaysian class mates, you will talk with him, laugh with him, after one or two month you don't talk with him, if he find you in the street he wouldn't say Hi like you don't even know him" (Abdalla, Yemen).

"People is different than my country, you know when you study with Malaysian like guy, you are friend in one semester pass you like they don't know you, in my country if you study in one week or two weeks you can be close friends, you will see like ..Ow my friend.. They will hug you, but here if i see some Malay friend or some Chinese outside like stranger, like they don't know me just pass" (Ismailove, Uzbekistan).

4.5   Adjustment

Cultural adjustment is the changes made by the individuals to create relationship and connection with the host society (Gabel, Dolen & Cerdin, 2005). This study categorizes adjustment into two; culture adjustment which is international students' adjustment towards environmental, social, and food adjustment; and the other one is academic adjustment which is about how students adjust academic challenges they face. Some students face challenges in academic related matters, while some others concern more about culture related challenges.

4.5.1 Cultural adjustment

Students struggle to adjust cultural differences to succeed their educational goals; two major culture shock faced by students are environmental differences and food culture shock, the face difficulties on adapting with social and overall country's system. To adjust the overall challenges they use different strategies, some of them like to mingle with local people to learn from them, while some others try to be open minded and accept challenges then at last the will fill normal as they argued.

> "Be open minded and open hearted, be ready to accept any information comes to you if it's bad or good and with this strategy you can move on with your life" (Hamid, Pakistan).

> "Everywhere you go you need to learn a lot about the place, even the language, even the culture, even the traditional way how to deal with them" (Ahmed, Egypt).

> "If you are in a foreign country you already know that you are going to face challenges with a foreign culture, but if you make the attempt to understand what is foreign to you, it becomes easier, once you understand something that

39

strange you don't this doubt or this misjudgement about people, once you understand why they are the way they are it makes easer for you to interact with them and find a way to interact with them even thought they are the way they are" (Bilkis, Sri Lanka).

"To mix with local you will have more information, more involvement in their lives, deeper understanding of their culture, mostly in my opinion there should be mixing to adapt faster" (Kurbanov, Uzbekistan).

"I believe interacting with them helps you understand the language, learn the language, learn the culture because when you don't talk with the people you don't know really what they are, what they capable of but when you talk to them interact with them, make friends with them, play football with them, it makes you easier to understand and learn about the culture, before i had Malaysian friends what i believed and what i believe now is different" (Sharif, Somalia).

In contrast, students try to adjust and overcome food based culture shock. They suffer a lot in their early months after their arrival, and students use different strategies to adjust. Students use different strategies to adjust food challenges, some of them cook at home, and some others eat at international restaurants until they adapt Malaysian food.

"You know the food is different; i have to cook or maybe eat at Arab restaurants or Western food because i am use to those Western foods, yeah in terms of food" (Ali, Cameroon).

Mr. Ali stated that he could not eat Malaysian food in early days in Malaysia, so in order to survive he chose to eat at international restaurants so he can get a food that he use to. Another student from Uzbekistan couldn't eat Malaysian food so he uses another strategy to cope with food culture shock.

"It's totally different, you know i couldn't eat Malaysian food it's so spicy, Uzbek people don't like eat spicy and we have too many kinds of food meals everything, soup, but here mostly rice because South Asian like rice, when

you go to restaurants you can see only rice and chicken, Uzbek people cook by their own, even i cook here in my home" (Ismailove, Uzbekistan).

Similarly, when another international student is asked about how he solved the food issues he experienced here, he stated that he prepare it by himself.

"I cook my own; I was allowed to cook in my room" (Salah, Egypt).

4.5.2 Academic adjustment

Students have difficulties in academic related issues also, they do not come to Malaysia and adapt the education system straight away, but they face some shock, but academic challenges are not as difficulty as social challenges; also it does not take long to adjust as social challenges. Students mentioned about the English language whereby University lecturers communicate, and the way of learning.

"Actually the education here in Malaysia is very good, and the facilities very good also, but the problem is like my lecturers speak English in Malaysian accent, that is the problem maybe they can't speak English or a little bit they should explain in Bahasa Malayu, all when we are talking in English i will not understand because i can't understand the accent, maybe they cut the half of the word" (Salem, Palestine).

"Yeah it's not easy, when I came here I entered English intensive course so I adapted the lecturer's pronunciation, before it was very difficult but now it's easy to understand" (Yusuf, Libya).

"Their accent and when i say something, even if its correct but its not like their accent they can't understand totally, specially they speak the go for British accent so some words is not like here, i took as American language so when i say Elevator they don't know what elevator is, i faced once i was looking for elevator no one understood" (Hashim, Syria).

"For the first semester i was like, i can't follow up the lecturer, some of the class i don't actually have any idea what he is saying even though he is speaking English. But yes, time after, day by day, because when i was studying English most of them they talk good English, British Council and ULS so the lecturers was good, when i came here i meet Malaysia accent lecturers" (Ayman, Yemen).

Apart from that some students are complaining about understanding the accent of the lecturer, there are also some others who described their experience and what they have experience about Malaysia's education system.

"The education culture in here is very conservative and linear. So it's quite different in my opinion, because like it's based on memorization" (Putri, Indonesia).

4.5.3   Stages of adjustment

To illustrate the stages of cultural adjustment, one of the first models of cultural adjustment developed by Lysgaard (1955) is used in this study. Here is the process of cultural adjustment stages, starting from the first time the students arrive, until they full adjust and adapt to the local culture.

Cultural adjustment developed by Lysgaard (1955)
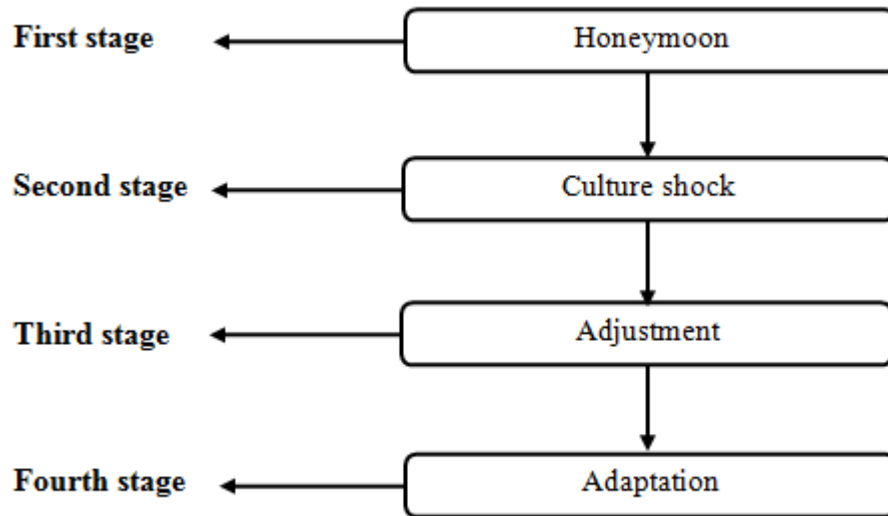
First stage (Honeymoon), occurs during the early days after arrival of the person in new country. Applying this to the international students in Malaysia, they experience the same process. When they first arrive here in Malaysia they feel exited and love the new environment.

> "I was actually excited, because i heard about Malaysia and i wanted to come here, because i have never been to East Asia as well as its Muslim country, i was more curious" (Omar, Sudan).

> "My first impression i realize that Malaysian are friendly, they were laughing..laughing, it was good, Malaysian were really friendly" (Mikel, Nigeria).

Second stage (Culture shock), as the above students stated, they were so pleased to come to Malaysia, and they were excited to be here in the first time, none of them was thinking about the challenges ahead, all they were seeing was the beautiful and positive side of the country and the people. This is one of the characteristics of honeymoon stage where expatriates feel excited in the new

environment. But, after few time when the honeymoon stage finishes, they started to suffer and feel culture shock. They had to go through all other stages before they finally feel adapted.

> "I was little bit shocked later, food was shocking because they have a lot of spicy. People here are different because they are quiet, we speak loud when we talk they think like we fighting it was little bit shocking" (Omar, Sudan).

> "First time i feel it's nice, its actually very good for student life, but I think there is a lot of differences, food is different over here than my culture, there is no food which is matching to my culture, entirely different and the people also are here are different" (Hamid, Pakistan).

> "I had a lot of difficulties adapting Malaysia food, weather; everything was new to me when i arrived, specially the food" (Sharif, Somalia).

Third stage (Adjustment), when students go through the first two stages which are honeymoon and culture shock, the try to find a away to deal with challenges in order to reach their educational goals. In this stage, students use different strategies to adjust, some of them try to learn from the local so it will be easier for them to overcome the culture shock.

> "I overcome this shock i started speaking to them, i started to know them who are they and how they live and their life style, so i realise i can cope with them so i feel inside myself some happy feelings that i am ok" (Hamid, Pakistan).

This student stated that he decided to interact with the local people in order to understand them first, and then learn their culture so he would be able to adapt the local people's culture.

Similarly, this student had problems with spicy food, when he faced food difficulties and it took him quite time to adapt, he started to adjust by using some strategies that he can avoid spicy food.

> "I started eating at Indian restaurants because its quite different, there are none spicy soups there are sweet which i adapted at the end, it was really easier for me to eat Indian foods most of the time plus i had to cook sometimes i have to on my own when i don't have time and i am busy i have to eat Indian food plus we have Somali restaurant finally at International Islamic University Malaysia so i can go there if i miss my food" (Sharif, Somalia).

Another student had difficulties on social integration, and it was quite tough for him to find friends or mingle with locals, so he decides to adjust by making himself open to the local and start interacting with them.

> "i knew i am staying in Malaysia for long time, so i started to learn more, even if they didn't allow me i try and ask them, me i was welcoming more than they welcoming me, to be kind actually with them, to be passion" (Idriss, Eritrea).

The fourth stage (Adaptation), is the final stage of the cultural adjustment stages, this is occurs when international students feel adapted and part of the local people. They feel comfortable and relaxed with the environment. They successfully become adjusted to the norms and values of the host country.

> "I saw myself adjusting to the people and country where i am staying i felt like this is my place so i have to stay here some time and suddenly u feel like you are adjusted and you feel normal. The first time i come here i felt a bit awkward after some time it becomes normal and the life goes on" (Hamid, Pakistan).

> "I use to know their culture and i face many things many people here, i know their culture, i can say i adapted because i lived with Malay family in a

program organized by University. They teach us how to live with Malay family to know their own culture" (Ismailove, Uzbekistan).

"Everything different in the first time, I have shock but after months, I try to interact with the people, and now i eat Malaysian food no problem" (Tareq, Jordan).

These students highlighted their initial challenges they face when they first came to Malaysia, but after awhile they adapted with the local culture. Everyone has his own challenges, after undergoing the cultural adjustment process they look adjusted, the one who was suffering from food challenges he stated that he can eat Malaysian food after awhile, while those who were could not interact with locals seem to be part of the local as they have Malaysian friends.

4.6   Adaptation

Adaptation is important for international students to succeed their academic goals, when culture shock occurs, every student feel that challenges and come up with a solution. The way students adjust themselves in order to adapt is different, they use variety of strategies for adaption.

4.6.1   Strategies to use to adapt

Students use different strategies to cope with diversity and feel adjusted. One of the common strategies used by international students to adapt is having local friends, so they can learn from them.

"To adapt, you should have a lot of Malaysia friends to help you, if you get any problem you should ask them maybe" (Salem, Palestine).

Some students believe that it is better to try things, as they might be better than what they think before. One student argued, to adapt the local food you should try, then you will adapt.

> "I try to take this food and now no problem, in the first time I depend on myself I bring what I like from Changloon and cook, but now I can eat, I find good food" (Tareq, Jordan).

Being an open and flexible is a key to adapt to the local culture as one of the interviewees argued.

> "Just learn how people live, don't be so stuck in your own ways in your own culture, just be accepting and understanding of how the local people behave and also try to learn their language, eat their food, make friends with locals" (Putri, Indonesia).

Another adaptation strategy that one of the students uses is not to make prejudgements, as she argued some international students feel afraid of the diversity before they even experience any difficulties and that could prevent them to adapt.

> "The first think is you don't keep judgments in your head before you talk to them, give them the opportunity to get to know, a lot of us do make pre judgments because of the things that we are told, so if you already have like these things in your head it is going to prevent you from adapting" (Bilkis, Sri Lanka).

4.6.2   External factors that help to adapt

There are external factors that prevent from them to feel more culture shock; and also help them feel comfortable with host country. These factors are; Similarities in religion, having the experience of living abroad before, and learning about Malaysia before arrival.

4.6.2.1 Similarities in Religion

Majority of interviewees who practice Islamic religion revealed that they feel less challenges, because similarities in religion with Malaysia helps them to feel comfortable with local norms.

"In Malaysia i didn't suffer that much, Malaysia is Islamic country, religion influences mainly in their culture" (Fahad, Saudi Arabia).

"I think there is no much different between our culture and Malaysian culture because we are all Muslims and we have a lot of similarities between them and us" (Mustafa, Syria).

"In terms of religion its good place for Muslims who want to come, everywhere you will find Masjid (Mosque)" (Yusuf, Libya).

"We have some similarities because my culture is actually influenced by Islam as well, so we value too much Islamic beliefs and everything and i see many things similar here in Malaysia with Malay people" (Ali, Cameroon).

"...this is one of the factors, the majority they are Muslims, so that its easy for you, one of the things of before you go out of the country is the religion, if you are going to Europe you be like worried about how i am going to pray and where, and how difficult is it to, how easily, but here Masjids are everywhere, Surau (Muslim prayer room) everywhere, so it was one of the factors" (Ayman, Yemen).

"...Malaysia as i told you not big different because they are Muslim country in general" (Tareq, Jordan).

According to these interviewees, similarity in religion reduces the level of culture shock. They stressed that since Muslim people's culture influenced by Islam, the culture shock they face is minor compare to how it would be if they were in non Muslim country.

4.6.2.2 Experience of living abroad

The interviewees stressed that having the experience of living abroad in previous sometimes can be helpful to adapt in foreign country compare to those who travel to overseas first time.

"I travelled a lot, I have been into Europe, I have been into many parts of Asia, Africa, it totally helps" (Fahad, Saudi Arabia).

"I have been in Thailand and China, i think it helps a lot, because it's where we teach our selves somehow like you know when i go to China and i will like ..ow this condition, so next time if i travel somewhere i will feel like this, but it will not be culture shock happening to me" (Anisa, Indonesia).

"...of course it helps, why not? I have been more than 15 countries before. For example in last holiday i have been in Indonesia, i have lived there around three weeks, so the culture is not much difference between Malaysia and Indonesia, so i may say experience of Malaysia helped me in Indonesia" (Kurbanov, Uzbekistan).

4.6.2.3 Learn about the country before arrival

Some of the international students helped by their knowledge about Malaysia before they arrive, they searched online or asked friends who live in Malaysia to know more about the country before they fly from the home, so that helped to reduce the level of culture shock and feel normal with the environment.

"I can't say that i was shocked because before i came here i tried to get more information about Malaysia, i knew what i am going see here and i talked to many people and they explain to me how Malaysians are and i Google, so i was not shocked" (Ali, Cameroon).

"You know i'm civil engineer so i look at the documentary about KLCC tower, so i have basically what is going to be there, It's very easy to research on any culture you want to go to or any country you want to go to, there is no main shock for me. Media give the general overview also" (Hashim, Syria).

4.7   Conclusion

This chapter presents the analysis of all data that has been collected. In order to get relevant and meaningful result, all the information was analysed. The number of the participants, their education level and their country of origin were discussed in the chapter. However, the major contents of the research were also discussed based on participants' point of view and also with the reference of previous researchers who studied about the area.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter represents findings of the study by summarizing the crucial results of general findings. In addition, the chapter will provide recommendations, and also give suggestions for future researchers who are willing to study in this area. The limitations of the study will be discussed in the chapter, followed by general conclusion of the study that will be drawn at the end of the chapter.

5.2   Discussions and summary of findings

The aim of the research was to study cultural adjustment of international students in Malaysia. The adjustment process that students go through has been divided into three main stages; type of culture shock they face, how they adjust culture challenges, and strategies they use to adapt.

The objective of the research was to answer research question which are

1) What type of cultural shock do International students in Malaysia face?

2)   How does cultural shock and unfamiliar environment will affect students' life style?

3)   Are there strategies to use in order to avoid cultural shock impact?

4)   How international students in Malaysia cope with cultural shock?

5)   How students make cultural adjustment?

6) How does things they are common with Malaysian culture helps to adapt?

To collect useful information that can help to achieve the goal of the study; an in-depth interview has been conducted with twenty five international students from seventeen different countries across the world. After the data was collected, qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the data.

Based on the findings of the study, international students in Malaysia face several types of culture shock such as food, weather, language and social integrations. To analyze the culture shock that students experience, the study uses one of the first models of cultural adjustment developed by Lysgaard (1955). The four cultural adjustment stages undergone by students were stressed by study, the honeymoon stage, culture shock stage, adjustment stage, and adaptation stage.

The study found that students undergo all these stages, from the honeymoon stage where students feel excited and love all the surroundings, before they face culture shock and start to suffer the differences in the host country, and later they try to cope with challenges and adjust, and finally after going through all other stages they feel adapted with local culture.

Students use different strategies to cope with cultural diversity in order to adjust and achieve their educational goals. Some of them seek help from local people as they create friendship with them, because they believe they can learn from them

so they can tackle the challenges. Some other think positively, and they believe being positive is a good strategy to adapt with local culture and defeat culture shock.

However, study found that there are other external factors that help students to adjust. Students who share similar culture with Malaysian society either the language or the religion are more likely to settle culture shock issues. Additionally, those who have travelled and lived abroad before, the experience they get during their time in overseas help them to adjust earlier than those who travel to abroad first time.

Moreover, there are some other students who learn more about Malaysia through online before they come, and also seek advice from their seniors who are already in Malaysia, for that reason, once they arrive they will not be shocked that much because they already knew what to expect when they come to Malaysia.

5.3   Limitations of the study

After discussing the findings of the study, it is also necessary to highlight some limitations that exist in the study. One significant limitation is that the findings of this study cannot be generalized; the participants of the study were number of international students that have been interviewed, so it may not be suitable to generalize the result of the study into big number of population.

Participants of the study were twenty five international students from six Malaysian public universities. The result would be effective if the number of the

students were more than this, and the institutions as well, twenty five students from seventeen different countries involved in the study, and if an interview is conducted with larger number of students, the study would also be better.

5.4 Recommendations for future research

The aim of the research was to enhance our understanding on cultural adjustment of international students, the adjustment process they go through, and adaptation strategies they use. Based on the findings of this study, international students in Malaysia suffer culture shock in their early time in Malaysia which distract their study; hence, this study suggests for Malaysian institutions to create a program for international students that will help them to adapt with local culture, this will help students to settle earlier. Such orientation program will help them defeat culture shock problems, so students will be able to success their educational goals with less culture shock problems.

Since the findings of the study cannot be generalized due to the number of the data which is not sufficient enough to generalize into big number of population, future researchers who are willing to study in the field of cultural adjustment of international students are recommended to find out further and deeper information. If future researchers conduct further investigation on the study, they results and findings would be suitable to generalize or draw perfect conclusion.

5.5   Conclusion

The aim of this study was to illustrate the cultural adjustment of international students in Malaysia, the type of culture shock and the process of adjustment students experience has been briefly explained in the study.

The study provides some findings and reached the objective of the research. The findings of the study provide detailed facts related with the type of culture shock faced by students, and how they overcome the obstacles. Internal factors that help students to adjust which are the solutions they come up when they face challenges and external factors which their experience and knowledge about Malaysia that help them to adjust are all discussed in the study.

REFERENCES

Adler, N. (1997). International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. 3rd ed. Ohio: South-Western College Publishing.

Adler, N. (2008). International dimensions of organizational behavior. Mason, OH: Thomson-South-western.

Adler, P.S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. Journal of Humanistic Psychology 15(4): 13-23.

Aldous, H. (1884-1963). A Memorial Volume, ed. Julian Huxley (New York: Harper & Row (1965) p. 149.

Ang, P. L. D. & Liamputtong, P. (2007). "Out of the circle": Reflection on conducting research into the views of international students from mainland China towards the use of university counselling services. Journal of Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association, 30, 6-26.

Aycan, Z. (1997). Expatriate adjustment as a multifaceted phenomenon: individual & organizational level predictors. The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 8(4), 434-456.

Babbie, E. (1998). *Survey Research Methods* (2nd ed.). Belmont: Wadsworth. Ch. 18. Newman, W. L. (2003). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (5th ed.). Boston: A&B. Ch. 16.

Bama, L.M. (1983). The stress factor in intercultural relations. In D. Landis and R.W. Brislin (eds.), Handbook of Intercultural Training, Volume 1I. New York: Pergamon.

Bandura, A. (1977) Social Learning Theory. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bartlett, C. A. & Ghoshal, S. (2003). What is a global manager? Harvard Business Review, 81(8), 45-51.

Bennet, R., Aston, A. & Colquhoun, T. (2000). Cross-cultural training: A critical step in ensuring the success of international assignments. Human Resource Management, 39, 239-250.

Bennett, M.J. (1998). *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Selected Readings*, Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME.

Berry, J. W. (1980). Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In A. Padilla (Ed.), Acculturation: Theory, models and findings (pp. 9–25). Boulder: West view.

Berry, J. W., Kim, U., Minde, T. & Mok, D. (1987). Comparative studies of acculturative stress. International Migration Review, 21, 491-511.

Berry, J.W. (1992). Acculturation and adaptation in a new society. International Migration. 30. 69-85.

Berry. J.W. (1980). Social and cultural change. In H.C. Triandis & R. Brislin (Eds.), Handbook of cross-cirlrural ps),chology, Vol. 5. Social (pp.211-279). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Black, J.S. (1988). "Work role transitions: a study of American expatriate managers in Japan", Journal of International Business Studies, Summer, pp. 277-94.

Black, J.S. & Gregersen, H.B (1999). The right way to manage expatriates. Harvard Business Review, 77, 52-63.

Black, J.S. & Stephens, G.K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. Journal of Management, 15, 529–544.

Black, J.S. (1998). Work role transitions: A study of American expatriate managers in Japan. *Journal of International Business Studies,* 19, 277-294.

Black, J.S., Mendenhall, M.E., (1990). Cross-Cultural effectiveness: A review and theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review,* 15, 113-136.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (1982). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods. Boston:* Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

Caligiuri, Paula; Lazarova, Mila; Tarique, Ibraiz. (2005). Training, learning, and development in multinational organizations. In Hugh Scullion & Margaret Linehan (Eds.), International human resources management: A critical text (pp. 71-90). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chew, J. (2004). Managing MNC expatriates through crises: A challenge for international human resource management. Research and Practice in Human Resource Management, 12(2): 1–30.

Constantine, M.G., Okazaki,S.,& Utsey,S.O. (2004). Self-concealment, social self-efficacy, acculturative stress, and depression in African, Asian, and Latin American international college students. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 74, 230-241.

Creswell, J. (1994). Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approachs*. Los Angeles.

Crocitto, M., Sullivan, S., & Carraher, S. (2005). Global mentoring as a means of career development and knowledge creation: A learning based framework and agenda for future research. Career Development International, 10(6/7).

Feldman, D., & Thomas, D. (1992). Career management issues facing expatriates. Journal of International Business Studies, 23(2), 271–293.

Gabel, R. S., Dolan, S. L. & Cerdin, J. L. (2005). Emotional Intelligence as predictor of cultural adjustments for success in global assignments. Career Development International, 10 (5), 375-395.

Geertz, Clifford, Religion as a cultural system. In: The interpretation of cultures: selected essays, Geertz, Clifford, pp.87-125. Fontana Press, (1993).

Hall, E.T. (1976). Beyond Culture. New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday.

Harzing, A.W.K. (1995). "The persistent Myth of High Expatriate Failure Rates", *The international journal of Human Resource Management, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 457-475.*

Hayes, A. F., & Krippendorff, K. (2007). Answering the call for a standard reliability measure for coding data. Communication Methods and Measures, 1, 77-89.

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture's Consequences: *International Differences in Work-related Values*. London: Sage Publications.

Huang, T.J., Chi, S.C., & Lawler, J.J. (2005). The relationship between expatriate's personality traits and their adjustment to international assignments. International Journal of Human Resource Management, 16, 1656-1670.

Javidan, M., & House, R. J. (2001). Cultural acumen for the global manager: Lessons from project GLOBE. Organizational Dynamics, 29, 289-305.

Johnston, R. (1963). New approach to the meaning of assimilation. American Anthropologist, 69, 306-321.

Kahn, Robert L., & Charles F. Cannell. (1957). The Dynamics of Interviewing: Theory, Technique, and Cases.

Kamoche, K. (2000). Developing managers: The functional, the symbolic, the sacred, and the profane. Organization Studies, 21(4), 747-774.

Kerlinger, F.N. (1986). Foundations of Behavioural Research, 3rd edn, Holt Rinehart & Winston.

Kim, Y.Y., & Ruben, B.D. (1988). Intercultural transformation: A systems theory. In Y.Y. Kim & W.B. Gudykunst (Eds.) Theories in intercultural communication, (pp.299-321). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Kim, Y.Y. (1979). Toward an interactive theory of communication-acculturation. Communication Yearbook. 3, 435-453.

Klopf, D.W. (1995). Intercultural Encounters: The Fundamentals of Intercultural Communication (3rd Edn.). Englewood, CO: Morton Publishing Company.

Kothari, C.R. (1985). Research Methodology-Methods and Techniques, New Delhi, Wiley Eastern Limited.

Kottack, C. P. (2005). Windows on Humanity, pp. 209, 423. McGraw Hill, New York.

Kroeber, A.L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions.* Harvard University Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology Papers 47.

Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). Psychological stress and the coping process. New York, NY: Springer.

Lin, J. G., & Yi, J. K. (1997). Asian international students' adjustment: Issues and program suggestions. College Student Journal, 31(4), 473-485.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Cannella, G. S. (2004a) Dangerous discourses, methodological conservatism and governmental regimes of truth, Qualitative Inquiry, 10(1), 5–14.

Linton, R (1945). The Cultural Background of Personality. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

Lueke, S. B., & Svyantek, D. J. (2000). Organizational socialization in the host country: The missing link in reducing expatriate turnover. The International Journal of Organizational Analysis, 8(4), 380-400.

Lynch, E. W. (1992). From culture shock to cultural learning. In E. W. Lynch & M. J. Hanson (Eds.), *Developing cross-cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families* (pp. 19–34). Baltimore: Paul H. Brooke.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). "Adjustment in a Foreign Society: Norwegian Fulbright Grantees Visiting the United States." International Social Science Bulletin 7:45–51.

Marx, E. (1999). Breaking through culture shock. London: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

McLachlan, D.A., Justice, J. (2009), "A grounded theory of international student well-being", *Journal of Theory Construction and Testing*, Vol. 13 No.1, pp.27-32.

Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G.R. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: A review. Academy of Management Review, 10(1), 39-47.

Merriam, S. (2009). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mertler, C. A. (2006). Action research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mezias, J. M. & Scandura, T. A. (2005). A needs-driven approach to expatriate adjustment and career development: A multiple mentoring perspective. Journal of International Business Studies, 36(5), 519-538.

Minichiello, V. & Kottler, J. A. (2010a). An overview of the qualitative journey: Reviewing basic concepts. In V. Minichiello & J. A. Kottler (Eds.), Qualitative journeys: Student and mentor experiences with research (pp. 11–31).

Mulholland, J. (1991). The Language of Negotiation. London: Routledge.

Noe, R.A., Hollenbeck, J.R., Gerhart, B. & Wright, P.M. (2006). Human Resource Management: Gaining A Competitive Advantage.

O'Guinn, T. C., Imperia, G., & MacAdams, E. A. (1987). Acculturation and perceived family decision making input among Mexican-American wives. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *18*, 78-92.

Oberg, K. (1960). "Culture shock: adjustment to new cultural environments". Practical Anthropology, 7, 177-182.

Ownbey, S. F. & Horridge, P. E. (1997). Acculturation Levels and Shopping Orientations of Asian-American Consumers. Psychology & Marketing, 14(1), 1-18.

Pantelidou, S. & Craig, T.K.J. (2006). Culture shock and social support. A survey in Greek migrant students. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 41, 777-781.

Paul, E. Green, Donald S. Tull, Gerald A. (1996). Research for Marketing Decisions, Fifth Edition, Prince Hall, New Delhi.

Pedersen, P. (1995). The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents around the World. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Peltokorpi, V., & Froese, F. J. (2009). Organizational expatriates and self-initiated expatriates: Who adjusts better to work and life in Japan? The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 20(5), 1096-1112.

Pope, C., & Mays, N. (1995). Qualitative research: Reaching the parts other methods cannot reach: An introduction to qualitative methods in health and health services research.

Redfield, R., Linton, R., & Herskovits, M.J. (1936). Memorandum for the study of acculturation. American Anthropologist, 38, 149-152.

Richardson, J. & McKenna, S. (2001). Leaving and experiencing: why academics expatriate and how they experience expatriation. Career Development International, 7(2), 67-78.

Rossman, G. B. & Rallis, S. F. (1998). Learning in the field: An introduction to qualitative research.

Sam, D. L. (2000). Psychological adaptation of adolescents with immigrant backgrounds. The Journal of Social Psychology, 140, 5-25.

Sam, D.L. & Berry, J.W. (2006). *Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, W. & Ward, C. (1990). The prediction of psychological and sociocultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 14, 449-464.

Sinha, D. & D.P.S. Bhawuk (Eds.), Asian contributions to cross-cultural psychology (pp. 289-306). New Delhi, India: Sage.

Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). Culturally Speaking. Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory. 2nd edition. London: Continuum.

Tung, R. L. (1987). Expatriate assignments: Enhancing success, minimizing failure. Academy of Management Executive, 1(2), 117-126.

Varner, I. & Palmer, TM. (2006). Role of Cultural Self-Knowledge in Successful Expatriation, Singapore management review, Vol 27, No.1.

Ward, C. & Kennedy, A. (1993a). Psychological and socio cultural adjustment during cross-cultural transitions: A comparison of secondary students overseas and at home. *International Journal of Psychology*, *28*, 129-147.

Ward, C. & Kennedy, A. (1996a). Before and after cross-cultural transition: A study of New Zealand volunteers on field assignments. In H. Grad, A. Blanco, & J. Georgas (Eds.), Key issues in cross-cultural psychology (pp. 138-154).

Ward, C. & Kennedy, A. (1996 b). Crossing cultures: The relationship between psychological and socio-cultural dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment.

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1993 b). Where's the culture in cross-cultural transition? Comparative studies of sojourner adjustment. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *24*, 221-249.

Young-Chul, C. (1996). Cross- cultural adjustment of expatriates: Theory & research findings on American and Japanese expatriates.