Universiti Utara Malaysia

INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS ADJUSTMENT IN MALAYSIA-THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY, ACCULTURATION STRESS, AND PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

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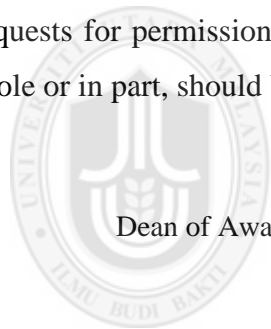
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Abstrak

Pelajar antarabangsa dengan bahasa penguasaan rendah bahasa Inggeris tetap berisiko tinggi untuk penyelarasan akademik, sosial, dan psikologi yang tinggi. Walau bagaimanapun, kebanyakan kajian mengenai kemahiran bahasa telah dijalankan dengan penutur Bahasa Inggeris bukan asli di negara-negara barat Anglo Sexon yang mewujudkan jurang yang luas dalam kajian berkaitan dengan negara-negara berbahasa Inggeris bukan asli seperti Malaysia. Kajian ini dilaksanakan untuk memahami mekanisme di mana kemahiran bahasa dapat mempengaruhi pelarasan pelajar. Kajian ini meneroka tekanan pembudayaan dan sokongan sosial sebagai kontruk yang berpotensi menghubungkan kajian yang menyiasat bahasa dan mengkaji penyesuaian diri pelajar. Kajian ini telah menggunakan reka bentuk kajian kolerasi. 659 pelajar antarabangsa pascasiswazah dari lima universiti awam di Malaysia telah dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik pensampelan pelbagai peringkat sebagai sampel kajian ini. Analisis Model *Structural Equational* mendedahkan bahawa model ini sesuai dengan data yang dikumpul dan ia mengesahkan bahawa kemahiran bahasa Inggeris adalah peramal penting dalam penyelarasan akademik, sosial dan psikologi pelajar antarabangsa dengan tekanan pembudayaan dan sokongan social sebagai pembolehubah mediator. Dapatan ini memberikan implikasi teoritis yang ketara dengan memperluas hubungan dan keberhasilan di kalangan pelajar lepasan ijazah antarabangsa kerana model-model sebelum ini telah difokuskan kepada pendatang dan pelarian. Selain itu, pengamal pendidikan tinggi dan pembuat dasar dicadangkan untuk melabur wang untuk memenuhi keperluan pelajar antarabangsa bagi meningkatkan kepuasan dan kesanggupan pelajar antarabangsa untuk mencadangkan institusi pendidikan Malaysia kepada orang lain.

Kata kunci: Penguasaan bahasa Inggeris, tekanan pembudayaan, sokongan sosial yang tertanggap, penyesuaian akademik, penyesuaian sosial, dan penyesuaian psikologi.

Abstract

International students with low proficiency of English language remain at high risk of academic, social, and psychological maladjustment. However, most of the studies on language proficiency have been conducted with non-native English speakers in Anglo Sexon western countries which creates a wide gap in research pertaining to non-native English-speaking countries such as Malaysia. The present research has sought to understand the mechanism by which language proficiency can influence students' adjustment. The study explores acculturation stress and social support as a construct that potentially connects the body of research investigating language and that examining students' adjustment. A cross sectional research design was employed. Data was collected from five public universities of Malaysia and a total number of 659 postgraduate international students were recruited using multistage sampling technique. Structural Equational Modeling analysis revealed that the model adequately fit the data collected and it confirmed that English language proficiency is a significant predictor of academic, social and psychological adjustment of international students and this relationship is mediated by acculturation stress and social support. The findings provided significant theoretical implication by extending the nexus of antecedent and outcomes in the international postgraduate students as previously existing models focus on migrants and refugees. Moreover, it also offers recommendations for higher education practitioners and policymakers to invest money for identifying and satisfying the needs of international students for increasing the satisfaction and willingness of international students to recommend Malaysian educational institutions to others.

Keywords: Perceived English language proficiency, acculturation stress, perceived social support, academic adjustment, social adjustment, and psychological adjustment.

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List of Abbreviations

ELP	English Language Proficiency
SIT	Social Identification Theory
SCT	Stress & Coping Theory
CLT	Culture Learning Theory
FA	Factor Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The present chapter provides an overview of the study which begins with a description of the background of the pertinent issues leading to the problem statement. In the next section, the research objectives and research questions are explained, followed by the conceptual framework and the scope of the study. Finally, the operational definitions of the study variables are provided.

1.2 Introduction

People have travelled throughout the world for various purposes such as trading, working, traveling, and studying. Technological development and globalization have made it easier to move across various national boundaries. This has led to an increase in international mobility. Among the international mobility, global mobility in education especially higher education is popular. The issue of cross-cultural adjustment becomes paramount since international students try to overcome challenges and flourish academically, socially, and psychologically in a new environment. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify the factors influencing international postgraduate students' academic, social, and psychological adjustment in Malaysian public universities, an emerging education hub in the region.

1.3 Background of the Study

Globalization of higher education has opened incalculable doors for culturally diverse contacts. In 2016, the number of tertiary students studying abroad rose to five million,

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Appendix A

Instrument

Dear respondent,

I am Sana. A postgraduate student of PhD in educational psychology from school of education and modern languages (SEML). I am conducting a research on the acculturation stress, help seeking and adjustment of international students in UUM. The information obtained is crucial for the researcher, to complete the research paper. All information given is confidential and will be kept as secret. Thus, all the given answers will be kept as secret and be used only for academic purpose.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Thank you.

Demographic information profile

Tick the appropriate option

Age		
Gender	Male	Female
Level of education	Masters	PhD
Semester		
Nationality		

Instructions: Please rate your responses for questions below:

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I can understand people when they speak with me in English					
2	I can express my ideas in English					
3	I can read English text.					
4	I can write about different about different topics in English.					

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	My friends really try to help me.					
2	I can depend on my friends in the time of difficulty					
3	I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows.					
4	I can talk about my problems with my friends.					
5	There are people who are around when I am in need					

Sr no	Statement					
6	The international students center on campus is available when I need it.					
7	I can talk about my problems with members in international students' organization.					
8	I trust university would offer me help when I need it.					

Sr no	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I feel homesick in this university					
2	I feel uncomfortable in eating Malaysian food					
3	I am treated differently in social situations at university					
4	People in Malaysia criticize my culture.					
5	I feel nervous to communicate in English					
6	I feel sad living in unfamiliar university surroundings.					
7	I fear for my personal safety in Malaysia as I belong to different culture.					
8	I do not feel comfortable in participating in social activities.					
9	People in Malaysia are biased toward me.					
10	I feel guilty to leave my family and friends back in my country					
11	Many opportunities are denied to me in this university					
12	I feel angry that my people from my country are considered inferior here					

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13	A lot of stress has been put on me after coming to Malaysia					
14	I feel that I receive unequal treatment in this university.					
15	People in this Malaysian university shows hatred toward me through their actions.					
16	I feel low because of my cultural background					
17	People don't appreciate my cultural values in this university.					
18	In Malaysia, I miss my people and my country.					
19	I feel uncomfortable adjusting to Malaysian culture					
20	I feel that my country people are discriminated in Malaysian university					
21	I feel that my status in this university is low due to my culture background. or nationality.					
22	In this university I am treated differently because of my race or nationality					
23	I feel insecure in this university .					
24	I don't feel a sense of belonging in this university					
25	I feel some people don't associate with me because of my nationality					
26	People in this university show hatred toward me through words.					
27	I feel guilty that I am living a different					

		Strongly Disagree				

	lifestyle in this university.					
28	I feel sad leaving my relatives behind in my country					

Sr no	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I have clear academic goals					
2	I consider university degree important					
3	I enjoy my academic work					
4	My most interests are related to my course work and research.					
5	I keep myself up-to-date with latest academic work					
6	I work as hard as I can for my studies.					
7	I am motivated to study at university in Malaysia					
8	I meet my supervisor regularly					
9	I attend my classes regularly					
10	I find my postgraduate studies difficult					
11	I am not doing well in my postgraduate studies.					
12	I am satisfied with my academic performance					
13	I do not feel smart enough for my academic work					
14	I do not use study time efficiently					
15	I enjoy writing papers for my courses and thesis					

#						
16	I have trouble concentrating when studying					
17	I don't have problem with my academic work.					
18	I am satisfied with variety of research areas offered in this university					
19	I am satisfied with quality of supervision					
20	I am satisfied with the study program offered at this university					
21	I am satisfied with my supervisors					
22	I am satisfied with my course instructors (lecturers and professors)					
23	I am satisfied with academic environment of this university					
24	I am involved in university social activities					
25	I am adjusting well to university					
26	I have a lot of close friends					
27	I have good social skills					
28	I am satisfied with my social participation in university					
29	I am satisfied with my social life in this university					
30	I meet people and make friends					
31	I have an informal contact with my supervisor					
32	I get along well with my study mates at university					

33	I am having difficulty feeling comfortable with other people in university					
34	I do not mix well with students of opposite gender					
35	I have good friends to talk about my problems					
36	I miss home					
37	I feel lonely at the university					
38	I would rather be home than attending this university					
39	I am happy about my decision to attend this university					
40	I enjoy living close to the university					

Appendix B

Permission letters

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