

# Predictors of Cultural Adjustment among International Students in Malaysia: Counseling Implications

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# Background

- Global competition to attract international students
- Singapore's vision of becoming a center of excellence in international education
- Malaysia's Educational Development Plan 2001-2010: 100,000 foreign students by 2010
- MoHE 2012: 200,000 foreign students by 2020

# Increasing Foreign Students

## Advantages

- Income from tuition fees, living expenses
- Improve quality –competition
- Cultural exposure for locals

## Challenges

- Crime
- Insensitivity to local customs
- Failure to adapt to local culture

# Factors affecting cross-cultural adjustment of Int'l Students (Ward et al. 2001)

## Social

social support

Cultural distance

## Psychological

Adjustment style

General mental health

## Academic

Language proficiency

Learning style

# Purpose of the Present Study

1. Examine how accurately is the cultural adjustment of international students at a selected university in Malaysia is predicted by gender, age, marital status, prior sojourner experiences, social support, and cultural distance,
2. Identify any predictor variables that do not contribute significantly to the prediction model, and
3. Determine if the obtained regression equation resulting from a set of six predictor variables allows us to reliably predict the cultural adjustment of international students in Malaysia.

# Table 1. Participants (N=105)

Country	N	Country	N	Country	N
Somalia	18	Tanzania	4	Sri Lanka	3
Indonesia	14	Bangladesh	4	Eritrea	3
Nigeria	9	Guinea	3	Morocco	2
Sudan	9	Uganda	3	Mauritania	2
Kenya	8	India	3	Afghanistan	2
Yemen	6	China	3	Turkey	2

Other countries include: Maldives, Ethiopia, Chad, and Algeria. Australia, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Malawi, Benin, Laos, India, Mozambique, Ghana, Iraq, Congo, and USA

# Instrument

- Based on Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1989)
- Dimensions:
- Academic Adjustment (Chronbach Alpha = .844)
- Social Adjustment (Chronbach Alpha = .784)
- Attachment (Chronbach Alpha = .755)
- Personal-Emotional Adjustment (Chronbach Alpha = .792)

# Findings: Academic Adjustment

- Method: Standard Multiple regression
- Overall model significantly predicts Academic Adjustment,  $R^2 = .175$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = .128$ ,  $F(6,105) = 3.721$ ,  $p < .005$ .
- Model accounts for 17.5% of the variance in Academic Adjustment (a moderate effect according to Cohen, 1988).
- Of the six independent variables only one variable (Social Support) significantly contributed to the model (Table 2).

Table 2. Model coefficients for Academic Adjustment

	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Bivariate <i>r</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Soc. Support	2.860	-3.83	4.255	.000	.379	.384
Gender	.046	.001	.013	.990	-.001	.001
Age	.525	.209	1.666	.099	.147	.148
Cult. Distance	-.523	-.021	.226	.821	-.009	-.020
Marital Status	-3.884	-.119	.971	.334	.067	-.086
Cult. Exper.	-2.668	-.078	.837	.405	-.094	-.074

# Findings: Social Adjustment

- Regression results indicate that the overall model significantly predicts Social Adjustment,  $R^2 = .272$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = .231$ ,  $F(6,105) = 6.543$ ,  $p < .001$ .
- This model accounts for 27.2% of the variance in Social Adjustment (a large effect according to Cohen, 1988).
- Of the six independent variables only one variable (Social Support) significantly contributed to the model (Table 3).

# Table 3. Model coefficients for Social Adjustment

	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Bivariate <i>r</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Soc. Support	2.957	.506	5.985	.000	.481	.504
Gender	-.089	-.003	-.035	.972	.043	-.003
Age	.188	.096	.812	.419	-.057	.079
Cult. Distance	-.865	-.045	-.509	.612	.004	-.050
Marital Status	-6.482	-.255	-2.205	.030	-.128	-.210
Cult. Exper.	-.832	-.031	-.355	.723	-.040	.035

# Findings: Attachment

- Regression results indicate that the overall model significantly predicts Attachment,  $R^2 = .152$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = .103$ ,  $F(6,105) = 3.134$ ,  $p < .01$ .
- This model accounts for 15.2% of the variance in Attachment (a moderate effect according to Cohen, 1988)
- Of the six independent variables only two variables (Social Support and gender) significantly contributed to the model.

## Table 3. Model coefficients for Attachment

	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Bivariate <i>r</i>	Partial <i>r</i>
Soc. Support	.837	.258	2.826	.006	.281	.266
Gender	4.086	.251	2.675	.009	.248	.253
Age	.235	.216	1.692	.094	.062	.163
Cult. Distance	.788	.075	.773	.441	.075	.075
Marital Status	-1.873	-.133	-1.064	.290	.014	-.103
Cult. Exper.	.357	.024	.254	.800	.003	.025

# Findings: Personal-Emotional Adjustment

- The regression equation was not significant ( $F(6,105) = .856, p > .05$ ) with an  $R^2$  of .047.
- None of the independent variables (age, gender, marital status, social support, prior cross-cultural experience, and cultural distance) is a significant predictor of Personal-Emotional Adjustment.

# Implications for Cross-cultural Counseling

- Need to improve multicultural competency
- Activate the key multicultural counselor roles of
  - Outreach
  - Advocate
  - Liaison
  - Change-agent
  - Consultant



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Thank you