

# PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ADAPTATIONS OF CHINESE STUDENTS IN ISLAMIC COUNTRY: A CASE STUDY OF CHINESE STUDENT IN UNIVERSITY OF PUTRA MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

The objective of this research is to study Chinese students' cross-cultural adaptations and analyze factors affected their adaptations in Malaysia. The results from regression analysis results show that personality and Malay ability had no significant effect on psychological adaptation but English ability and attitude towards Islamic culture has a significant positive impact on psychological adaptation. On the other hand, experience in the Islamic world has a significant negative effect on psychological adaptation. In terms of social adaptation process, English ability and attitude towards Islamic culture have significant positive effect on social adaptation. Thus, this study recommended that Chinese oversea students should enhance their cross-cultural ability to better adapt to social and culture of Malaysia by improve their English ability and adjust themselves to be positive attitude. Moreover, they should have sufficient preparation both in academic and financial aspects before they go to study aboard and during they are there.

**Keywords:** Cross-cultural adaptation, psychological and social adaptation, Chinese students

## Introduction

In September 2013, Chinese president XI Jinping proposed "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "Marine Silk Road" ("One Belt One Road") as development strategy for China "One Belt One Road" is the world longest span economic corridor, and most promising economic cooperation zone. "One Belt One Road" originated from China, through Central Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, West Asia, and part of Europe, involving along the 26 countries, covering about 4.4-4.6 billion people; the total economic output was 2.1 billion. At present, "One Belt One Road" has been accepted and approved by many countries and international organizations (Wong et al 2017). It emphasizes the relevant countries adhere to jointly build economic cooperation zone and share mutual benefit and prosperity. Through the "The Belt and Road" strategy, will better promote the people of all countries along to exchange friendly, promote between different races and different faiths and cultures live in harmony and common development, and bring more benefits to the people of all countries along. Under this circumstance, Chinese students nowadays have more and more opportunities to study abroad in "One Belt One Road" along countries during their college life or after graduation; meanwhile, the quantity of those students who will continue their studies abroad is also rapidly increasing. Today, the ancient Silk Road is full of new vitality and vitality. The number of students studying abroad is steadily increasing, by the end of 2015; China's total number of study abroad has reached 4,042,100, with an average annual growth rate of 19.06%. At the same time, the number of returnees is also increasing, from 248 in 1978 to 409,100 in 2015, and the total number of returnees has reached 2,218,600 with an average annual growth rate of 22.46%. Returned overseas students have a higher degree of education, better knowledge structure, work ability and international perspective and other obvious

advantages compared to domestic undergraduates (<http://www.moe.gov.cn>). Under such circumstances, this research study will Chinese oversea students who are studying in the Malaysia as sample to analyze their adaptations and factors affecting their adaptations. This article is a part of dissertation “Cross-Cultural Management for Chinese Students’ Adaptation on Academic and Social Achievements in Islamic Country”. The practical objective that the author meant to accomplish was to provide useful information to local teachers in order to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the cross-cultural adaptation experiences of Chinese overseas learners. Intellectually, the findings of this research could provide information and inspiration in Malaysian and Chinese organizations for teachers and administrators to develop efficient strategies to enhance service for Chinese oversea students. On the other side, the findings can assist incoming Chinese learners create willingness and consciousness to create a smooth change in their adaptation about cultural differences between China and the Malaysia. Objectives: To study Chinese students’ adaptations and analyze factors affecting their adaptations.

### **Review of Literature**

This paper will attempt to offer a substantial analysis of abundant literature with emphasis on the context of the following aspects: cross-cultural education; adaptation; besides, it will also provide some related studies on the context emphasized above including studies both in China and abroad. The theoretical background will be well expounded concerning theories on the cross-cultural adaptation and its application to Chinese students' adjustment to new environment while studying in Malaysia. Cross-cultural Adaptation Cross-cultural encounter means two individuals show significantly different communicative behaviors based on diverse social norms

deriving from groups that possess unique sets of values and beliefs (Ellingsworth, 1988; Deborah A.Cai & Jose I, Rodriguez, 1996). Cross-cultural adaptation has dealt with the psychological phases people go through when entering a foreign culture, the traits contributing to adjustment to a new culture, and the process of becoming an intercultural or bi-cultural individual (Ward, 1998) As Kim has pointed out, “the change from a sojourner with an ethnic identity to an assimilated individual with a cross-cultural identity is a process full of complexity, with amounts of influential forces pushing and pulling from multiple directions but ending in an individual, changed, in varying degrees, by the experience ” (Kim 2003).

Studying in a different country can be an exciting but challenging experience for international students who have to experience many adjustment problems, particularly those related to academic, social-cultural and psychological aspects (Ward & Kenney, 1993).

Theoretically, this study emphasizes and manifests the importance of cross-cultural adaptation theories in modern academic fields by elaborately reviewing a lot of literature and illustrations. Oberg's Culture Shock (1960), Lysgaard's U-Curve Model (1955), Kim's Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic (2001), Berry's Acculturation Strategies (2005), Kim's Structural Model (2001) and Ting-Toomey's Antecedent Factors (1999) are integrated in this study so as to investigate various perspectives of intercultural adaptation.

## **Methodology**

1. Overall influencing factors have positive effects on psychological adaptation.
2. Overall influencing factors have positive effects on social adaptation;

### Sampling Procedures.

The participants of the study are selected from undergraduates involved in long-term programs that have registered or stayed for more than 3 months in a college of Malaysia. So far, there are 204 Chinese students who are studying in this college; besides, the participants need to be proficient in oral speeches, which are determined by informal conversations, willingness to participate and what's more, the interview should be allowed to be recorded.

To decide the actual sample size of the respondents, Taro Yamane's formula is utilized. Based on which the population size of the target respondents, the sample size will be 200 Chinese students.

**Reliability and Validity.** The results of the reliability analysis show that the reliability of each level or structure is greater than 0.7, indicating that the reliability of the level or the structure is high; on the other hand, the reliability of the overall influencing factor scale is 0.86, indicating the reliability is satisfying.

### Validity analysis.

The results of the validity analysis show that the KMO is 0.750 greater than 0.7, indicating that the scale is suitable for factor analysis. The corresponding P values of the Bartlett sphericity test are less than 0.01, Therefore, Bartlett sphericity detection is of great significance, and it is very suitable for factor analysis.

**Regression.** In this study, regression analysis aims to test whether there are relationships between psychological adaptation; social adaptation and overall influencing factors for Chinese students studying in Malaysia.

### **Analysis and Results** Demographic characteristics of sample.

A demographic variable questionnaire prepared by the researcher was used in order to determine certain independent variables, namely: gender,

religion, highest degree obtained in China, purpose of staying in Malaysia, Major being studied in Malaysia, Length of duration in Malaysia, English level before arriving in Malaysia, Experience in Islamic countries.

A total of 200 valid questionnaires were collected from this questionnaire. Table shows that 83 men (41.50%) and 117 women (58.50%). As far as religion is concerned, 50 students belief in Buddhism (25%), 20 students' belief in Christian (10%), 6 students' belief in Islamic (3%), the vast majority of Chinese students (62%) do not have religious beliefs. In the survey of the interviewees' academic qualifications, they found that most of them were undergraduates and graduate students, accounting for 32.5% and 57% respectively. The purpose of coming to Malaysia was mostly for exchange students, accounting for 62% of the total interviewees. As far as the major of the interviewees was concerned, Most Chinese students choose social sciences, and a few choose natural sciences, accounting for 72.5% of the total. Most of the interviewees have accounted for 51% of the total for more than three months; most of the interviewees are exchange students for one semester. So most of the time we plan to live in Malaysia for 6 months accounts for 52.5% of the total. According to the survey on the English level of Chinese students before studying abroad, we found that most of the Chinese students have medium English proficiency. Accounting for 58.5% of the total, the number of Chinese students with poor English proficiency is 35%.

Hypothesis:

H 1: Overall influencing factors have positive effects on psychological adaptation;

H1a: personality has a positive effect on psychological adaptation;

H1b: English ability has a positive effect on psychological adaptation;

H1c: Malay ability has a positive effect on psychological adaptation;

H1d: Experience in Islamic Country has a negative effect on psychological adaptation;

H1e: the attitude towards Islamic culture has a positive effect on psychological adaptation;

Analysis of the influence of each dimension of influencing factors on psychological adaptation.

"Personality", "English Ability", "Malay ability", "experience in Islamic country", "attitude towards Islamic Culture" as independent variables, and dependent variables as "Psychological adaptation". The results of the regression analysis are shown in the following table.

The results of the below table show that the  $R^2$  of the model is equal to 0.264, which shows that the joint interpretation of independent variables is 26.4%

From the table, it can be seen that in the analysis of variance and F test of the model, the F value is 13.943, and the significant level P is less than 0.01, which reaches a very significant level, which indicates that it is meaningful to cooperate with the regression line, that is, at least one regression coefficient has a significant impact on the calibration variables.

The significant level of "personality" and "Malay ability" was 0.097 / 0.572, which was higher than 0.05 in terms of the significant test results of regression equation parameters and regression coefficients. No significant level was achieved, indicating that "personality" and "Malay ability" had no significant effect on "cross-cultural adaptation", assuming that H2a, H2c was rejected; The non-standardized regression coefficients of "English Ability", "Experience in the Islamic Country" and "The Attitude towards Islamic Culture" were 0.072, 0.080 and 0.214, respectively. The standardized regression coefficient was 0.157- 0.21440.80. The significant level P value of the three predictive variables was less than 0.01, which reached the significant level at

0.01 level. It shows that "English ability", "attitude towards Islamic culture" has a significant positive impact on "psychological adaptation", "experience in the Islamic world" has a significant negative effect on "psychological adaptation", suppose H2b, H2d, H2e was verified; From the standardized regression coefficient, we can see that "attitude towards Islamic culture" has the greatest influence on "psychological adaptation".

The non-standardized regression equation is: psychological adaptation= 2.842+ 0.072 \* English Ability -0.08 \* Experience in Islamic Country +0.214 \* The Attitude towards Islamic Culture

**Table 1. The relationship between Psychological adaptation and various Dimensions of influencing factors**

	Calibration variable:				Collinearity		
	psychological adaptation			t	Sig.	Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	2.842	.150		18.983	.000		
Personality	.056	.033	.110	1.668	.097	.867	1.154
English Ability	.072	.034	.157	2.148	.033	.708	1.412
Malay Ability	-.014	.025	-.042	-.567	.572	.700	1.429
Experience in Islamic Country	-.080	.029	-.214	-2.805	.006	.651	1.536
The Attitude towards Islamic culture	.214	.030	.480	7.035	.000	.815	1.227
R <sup>2</sup>	0.264						
F	13.943**						

H2: overall influencing factors have positive influence on social adaptation;

H2a: personality has a positive effect on social adaptation;

H2b: English ability has a positive effect on social adaptation;

H2c: Malay ability has a positive effect on social adaptation;

H2d: experience in the Islamic world has a positive impact on social adaptation;

H2e: the attitude towards Islamic culture has a positive effect on social adaptation;

Analysis of the impact of each dimension of influencing factors on social adaptation "Personality", "English Ability", "Malay Ability", "Experience in Islamic Country", "The Attitude towards Islamic Culture" as independent variables, and dependent variables as "Social adaptation". The results of the regression analysis are shown in the following table. The results of the below table show that the  $R^2$  of the model is equal to 0.334, indicating that the joint interpretation of independent variables is 33.4%.

It can be seen from the table that in the ANOVA and F test of the model, the F value is 19.415, and the significant level P is less than 0.01, which indicates that it is meaningful to cooperate with the regression line. That is, at least one regression coefficient has a significant effect on calibration variables.

As for the significant test results of regression equation parameters and regression coefficients, the significant level of "personality", "Malay ability" and "experience in Islamic Country" was 0.496. The results showed that "personality", "Malay ability" and "Experience in Islamic Country" had no significant influence on "social adaptation". Assume that H3a, H3c, H3d is rejected; the non-standardized regression coefficients of "English Ability" and "The Attitude towards Islamic culture" were 0.122 / 0.494 and 0.145 / 0.605,

respectively. The significant level P value of the two predictive variables was less than 0.05, and reached the significant level at 0.05 level, indicating "English Ability". "The Attitude towards Islamic Culture" has a significant positive effect on "social adaptation". From the standardized regression coefficient, we can see that "attitude towards Islamic culture" has the greatest influence on "social adaptation".

The non-standardized regression equation is: social adaptation= 1.685 +0.122 \* English Ability+ 0.494 \*The Attitude towards Islamic Culture.

**Table2. The relationship between Social adaptation and various Dimensions of influencing factors**

	Calibration variable:			Collinearity		
	social adaptation			t	Sig.	Statistics
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.685	.261		6.468	.000	
Personality	.040	.058	.043	.682	.496	.867
English Ability	.122	.059	.145	2.078	.039	.708
Malay Ability	-.036	.044	-.056	-.801	.424	.700
experience in Islamic Country	-.077	.050	-.112	-1.539	.125	.651
The Attitude towards Islamic Culture	.494	.053	.605	9.324	.000	.815
R <sup>2</sup>		0.334				1.227
F		19.415**				

## Findings

To study Chinese students' adaptations and analyze factors affected their adaptations.

The results of quantitative research method showed us In terms of psychological adaptation process, from significant test results of regression equation parameters and regression coefficients, it shows that "personality" and "Malay ability" had no significant effect on psychological adaptation, but "English ability", "attitude towards Islamic culture" has a significant positive impact on "psychological adaptation", "experience in the Islamic world" has a significant negative effect on psychological adaptation. From the standardized regression coefficient, we can see that "attitude towards Islamic culture" has the greatest influence on psychological adaptation.

In terms of social adaptation process, significant test results of regression equation parameters and regression coefficients; it shows that "personality", "Malay ability" and "Experience in Islamic Country" had no significant influence on "social adaptation". But, "English Ability", "The Attitude towards Islamic Culture" has a significant positive effect on social adaptation.

## Discussion

Based on the integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation referred by Young Yun Kim (1988), adaptation is the transformation process of new travelers' experiences when they come into a new environment. According to this theory, communication skills have an important role. Because communication issues for an immigrant will likely lead them feel alienated, homesick, and difficulty in expressing their feelings.

Language proficiency.

Some researchers argued host language proficiency is an important factor affecting adaptation (Benson, 1978) and also communicative ability of the migrants (Adler, 1982). This was followed by the study of Lysgaard (1955) which highlighted the importance of the communicative ability.

**Personality** A significant body of literature has examined the relationship between personality traits and expatriate outcomes. The meta-analysis conducted by Kims (1988) found that personality traits are significantly related to expatriate performance. Recent studies also found that personality traits impact cross-cultural adjustment dimensions.

Oberg (1960) believes that the development of specific cross-cultural skills and competencies are also important. He adds that the two most important cross-cultural competencies are: "A mindset that observes successful people and the ability to modify one's own behavior to work with that successful person in their culture." Learning new habits of behavior is the outcome of successful observation and changes in mindset, which both are a great foundation for cultural awareness and skill building.

**Attitude toward Islamic culture** Attitude is another important psychological factor affecting intercultural communication. Ward (1996) pointed out that the current research on attitudes seems to raise more questions than answers. Attitude can be understood as a psychological tendency to treat anyone, ideas and things. It determines in advance how people treat people, things, things or negative negations, or positive attitudes. Social psychologists believe that attitudes mainly include: cognition, emotion and intention.

**Experience in Islamic country** According to the intercultural communicative competence framework proposed by Chen Guoming and Starosta (1997, 2000), intercultural communicative competence consists of three levels: cognition, emotion and behavior. The cross-cultural

communication ability of the research object is measured in three aspects of cross-cultural communication knowledge, sensitivity and behavior. The average level of intercultural communication ability of the group with experience abroad is significantly higher than that of the group without experience abroad, especially in the two levels of intercultural communication knowledge and intercultural communication behavior.

### Suggestions to Chinese students

Language ability Foreign language ability plays an important role in education adaptation of international students; so foreign students must realize the importance of language skills and make adequate preparation before going abroad. Most of the remaining students have attended foreign language training and foreign language exams before going abroad, but this is only the first step in language preparation. Studies have shown that international students' TOEFL scores do not predict future academic success. Therefore, even if foreign students get high marks in the foreign language standard examination, they should not only satisfy the existing foreign language level. For most of its international students before the expression ability in understanding ability, students should cause enough attention, because language is an important part of the classroom learning and daily life. Therefore, students should pay attention to the training of these skills consciously before going abroad. In addition, for students studying in non-English-speaking countries, they should devote more time and energy to study abroad and prepare themselves for more difficulties psychologically.

Positive attitude Chinese students studying abroad are generally aware of the difficulties that they face in education adaptation, so they invest more time and energy than foreign students. After going abroad to continue to participate in the foreign language training, for example, some foreign

language skills before going abroad relatively weak groups, such as engineering students, without students studying English countries, go abroad to continue to participate in the number of foreign language training after a slightly higher proportion. This is also a typical example of the positive and active attitude of most overseas students in education adaptation.

Sufficient preparation will lay the foundation for studying abroad. First of all, language preparation has laid an important foundation for the study and life of overseas students. The foreign language competence of international students plays a key role in education adaptation. Secondly, academic preparation can lay the foundation for overseas students to complete their studies in foreign countries. International students in the country have received higher education in professional knowledge structure has certain base, are helpful to study abroad in the future, especially in the initial stage of studying, the original subject knowledge can help students to understand the new knowledge, improve their own ability to learn heart letter, lays the foundation for the smooth transition. Meanwhile, economic preparation should have an important impact on education fitness during the whole study abroad period. For overseas students, financial preparation before going abroad is an important factor influencing education adaptation after going abroad. Most of the students on the economy mainly depends on the support of family, but this does not mean that only the rich students can go abroad to study, students can still by colleges and universities at home and abroad to provide scholarships and their work way to maintain learning and living abroad, but either way, all need to have a long plan, without affecting the go abroad after school.

Studying abroad can receive better education; studying abroad can give better employment and entrepreneurship to students, and realize their own professional ideals; at the same time, studying abroad can promote self-

growth and perfection, and create a sound personality. It can achieve self-reliant and has a positive effect on improving its foreign language level; the longing for foreign humanistic environment and relaxed and free lifestyle and the open environment of foreign multiculturalism are the main reasons that influence contemporary college students to study abroad.

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