

Antecedents of Socio-cultural Adaptation among Chinese Academic Sojourners in Pakistan

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The present study was carried out to examine the impact of acculturation attitudes, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural capital on socio-cultural adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners. East Asian Acculturation Measure (Berry, 2001), Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994), Cross-cultural Capital Scale (Nawaz, 2017), and Revised Socio cultural Adaptation Scale (Wilson, 2013) were used for data collection. The participants of the study comprised of 200 academic sojourners that were approached by using purposive sampling. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression analysis were used to examine the hypothesized relationship and prediction of variables. Results indicated that acculturation attitudes, acculturative stress and cross cultural capital have a significant impact on the prediction of socio-cultural adaptation. The present study is insightful in understanding the process of adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners in the indigenous context.

Keywords: Acculturation, perceived acculturative stress, cross cultural capital, socio-culture adaptation

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Cross cultural contact has been a worldwide trend throughout history. People used to visit different countries for many reasons. According to Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) cross-cultural contact occurs with specific objectives in mind such as study, business, adventure, or immigration. Therefore, cross-cultural travelers are categorized on the basis of the reason to move toward societies other than their own. Cross cultural travelers who intend to settle in a new society are immigrants while those who seek temporary stay are sojourners.

Academic sojourners have become the major focus of cross-cultural researches as educational institutes, colleges and universities are rapidly recruiting them to become more globalized (Guo & Chase, 2011). Mazitova (2008) suggested that a substantial number of researches must be conducted to understand the level of socio cultural adaptation for specifically those academic sojourners who are pursuing their higher education. As the level of socio-culture adaptation will determine the extent to which a person is able to achieve his or her desired goal in a new society. Moreover, recruiting academic sojourners in universities can be a major source of economy. So, it is very important for universities to increase their interest to ensure successful adaptation of sojourners with local culture.

Socio-cultural adaptation is defined as the process through which sojourners fit with the new culture by changing their beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and overall way of life (Jameson, 2007). Acculturation related literature focused on two major factors responsible for successful adaptation such as macro-level factors (cultural environmental factor; Kim, 2005), and micro-level factors that include personality traits and certain situational and individual related factors (Ramalu, Rose, Uli, & Kumar, 2010). Theoretically, individual and situational related factors have a major contribution in cross-cultural adaptation. Thus, the present study intended to examine micro-level factors of socio cultural adaptation.

According to Berry (2006) socio-cultural adaptation is mainly influenced by acculturation attitudes that are adapted while

having continuous first hand contact with the culture that is different from their culture of origin or culture of birth. Acculturating individuals select acculturation attitudes following two major issues such as maintenance of heritage culture (to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered important, and their maintenance strived for) and contact participation with the host society (to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups, or remain primarily among themselves). The first issue involves two attitudes assimilation and separation that can be represented by bipolar arrows. Assimilation is marked with the wish to maintain daily interaction with host society and have no interest for the culture of birth. On the opposite end separation involves the wish to maintain the heritage culture while avoiding interaction with the host culture. The second issue includes other two attitudes integration and marginalization. The former marked with cultural integration that appears when acculturating individuals place value to hold the culture of origin and maintain active participation with host culture at same time. In contrast marginalization comes with little preference to follow heritage culture or seek participation and interaction with host society. Adaptation studies demonstrate that acculturation attitudes are linked with the level of fit between sojourners and host culture environment. The appropriate level of fit is achieved when integration and assimilation attitudes are adapted while this situation is reversed when separation and marginalization are accepted by sojourners (Berry, 1997).

Stress and coping perspectives of the acculturation process considers cultural transition as a major stress provoking change in life that limits the adaptive resources. Acculturating individuals are more vulnerable for negative affective responses such as stress. The stress that is specifically rooted in acculturation process is acculturative stress marked with reduction of physical, mental, and social well-being (Berry, 2006). Poyrazli, Kavanaugh, Baker, and Al-Timini, (2004) reported that, *“Despite the substantial body of literature that addresses adjustment processes among student*

sojourners, only a small portion of this literature has, in fact, addressed the issue of acculturative stress” (p. 73).

According to Sandhu and Asrabadi (1998) academic sojourners may not have enough resources to deal with the cultural transition that makes them vulnerable for acculturative stress. Moreover, when sojourners start their interaction with the host society they experience novelty and unawareness with the values and the behaviors of the new culture. This may hinder the process of adaptation. Similarly, a study conducted on Taiwanese sojourners studying in America demonstrated that functional adjustment during acculturation process is reduced by acculturative stress (Ying & Han, 2006).

In addition, cultural learning perspective studied socio-cultural adaptation with relation to culture specific skills and behavior. According to this perspective, failure in cultural adaptation is experienced due to skill deficits. Thus, the appropriate intervention for functional adjustment for acculturating individuals is the learning of cultural specific knowledge and skills. If they have more preparation, acquisition and orientation of knowledge, skills, belief systems, communication and values of the host culture they are more able to adjust (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Berry and Sam (1997) stated that acquisition of cultural specific knowledge, communication styles and interpersonal interaction patterns are key factors to sustain difficulties and have better adaptation in host society. Thus, the present study includes cross cultural capital as one of the predictor of socio-cultural adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners. Cross-cultural capital is defined as a set of knowledge, behavior, skills and dispositional traits that facilitate cross-cultural travel, interactions and work with host culture effectively (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008).

The process of acculturation is very challenging for acculturation in individuals as they have to fit in the society that is always at their opposing end in terms of views, expectations and behaviors. This situation may create stressful feelings among

immigrants (Eustace, 2007). How immigrants manage and what factors are responsible for their better adaptation is worthy of study. Nothing much has been studied regarding acculturation experiences of the Chinese in the context of Pakistan. The present study is an effort to better understand experiences of cross cultural transition among Chinese students in Pakistan.

The main objective of the present scientific study was to examine antecedents of socio-cultural adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners in Pakistan. This objective was achieved by testing the following hypotheses:

- Integration and assimilation attitudes will positively predict while separation and marginalization will negatively predict socio-cultural adaption among Chinese academic sojourners.
- Acculturative stress will negatively predict socio culture adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners
- Cross-cultural capital will positively predict socio culture adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners.

Method

Research Design

The current study employed a quantitative correlation survey research design, in which data was collected from Chinese academic sojourners in Pakistan.

Participants

The participants of the present study consisted of 200 Chinese academic sojourners. Both male and female sojourners were approached from three well known higher education institutes in Pakistan including International Islamic University, University of the Punjab, and the National University of Modern Languages. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used for approaching the participants according to which only those

sojourners could be the part of study who belong to China, who have spent minimum one year and maximum 5 years in Pakistan, who are full time university students and have been enrolled in some degree program and who have proper understanding of English language. Informed consent was obtained before administering the scales.

Instruments

Four self reported measures were administered to participants of the study. *East Asian Acculturation Measure* (Berry, 2001) comprising of 29 items including four subscales were used to measure acculturation attitude or acculturation attitudes. *Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students* (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) comprised of 36 items following sixteen areas of acculturation related stress was used to measure acculturative stress. *Cross-cultural Capital Scale* (Nawaz, 2017) based on 70 items following 10 categories of cross cultural competencies was used to measure cross cultural capital was used to measure cross cultural capital. The *Revised Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale* consisted of 21 items divided into 5 subscales were used to measure socio-cultural adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners (Wilson, 2013). All scales were based on Likert type response ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Moreover, the original value of alpha reliability coefficient for all scales ranged from .74 to .94.

Procedure

For the current study, 200 Chinese academic sojourners were approached from International Islamic university, Islamabad, University of the Punjab, Lahore, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad. Permission for data collection was taken from the concerned authorities. Participants were briefed regarding the purpose of the study and written informed consent was obtained before administering the questionnaires. During this process all queries on the part of participants were satisfied by the researcher.

Results

The data was analyzed on SPSS through Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics alpha reliability, Pearson product moment correlation among acculturation attitudes, acculturative stress, cross culture capital & socio-cultural adaptation (N=200)

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Integration	14.38	4.08	.78	-	.50** *	-	-	.61**	.64** *	.66* *
						.62* **	.45* **			*
2 Assimilation	23.44	6.77	.71	-	-	-	-	.65**	.77** *	.72* *
						.69* *	.49* *			*
3 Separation	20.26	6.03	.76			-	.43**	.89** *	-	-
									.80* **	.90* *
										*
										*
4 Marginalization	27.26	3.01	.70				-	.42** *	-	-
									.47* **	.46* *
										*
										*
5 Acculturative Stress	107.70	13.68	.92					-	.83** *	.78* *
										*
6 Cross Cultural Capital	207.64	41.06	.88						-	.87* *
										*
7 Socio-cultural Adaptation	59.73	17.31	.91							-

p< .01, *p< .001.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, alpha reliability coefficients and Pearson product moment correlation among study variables. Values of alpha coefficients ranging from .70 to .92

showing that all study scales including East Asian Acculturation Measure, Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students, Cross Cultural Capital Scale and Revised Socio cultural Adaptation Scale are reliable. Correlational analysis indicated that all acculturation strategies have a significant correlation with each other. In acculturation attitude, integration and assimilation have a significant positive correlation with socio-cultural adaptation while separation and marginalization have a significant negative relationship with socio-cultural adaptation. In addition acculturative stress was negatively correlated with socio-cultural adaptation while cross-cultural capital was found as a positive correlate of socio-cultural adaptation.

Table 2

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis showing the impact of acculturation strategies, acculturative stress and cross-cultural capital on socio-cultural adaptation (N=200)

Predictors	Model β	Outcome: Happiness 95%CI	
		LL	UL
(constant)	56.80**	[43.34	70.26]
Integration	.68***	[.46	.90]
Assimilation	.22**	[.32	.10]
Separation	-.71***	[-.87	-.56]
Marginalization	-.42***	[-.23	-.62]
Acculturative Stress	-.31**	[-.37	-.23]
Cross cultural capital	.14**	[.11	.17]
R^2		.894	
F		553.81**	

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 2 shows the results of multiple linear regression analysis with acculturation attitudes, acculturative stress and cross cultural capital as predictors of socio-cultural adaptation. The value of R^2 was .89 which indicated that predictor variables explained 89% variance in outcome variables with $F(6, 193) = 553.81$, $p < .001$. Findings revealed that acculturation attitudes including integration and assimilation positively predict ($\beta = .16$, $p < .001$; $\beta = .18$, $p < .001$) while separation and marginalization negatively predict socio cultural adaptation ($\beta = -.23$, $\beta = -.11$, $p < .001$). In the same line acculturative stress negatively while cross cultural

capital positively predicted socio cultural adaptation ($\beta = -.32$, ; 40, $p < .001$).

Discussion

The present study intended to examine acculturation attitudes, acculturative stress and cross-cultural capital as predictors of socio cultural-adaptation among Chinese academic sojourners in Pakistan. The first hypothesis postulated that acculturation attitudes including integration and assimilation will positively predict socio cultural adaptation. In addition it was also hypothesized that acculturation attitudes including separation and marginalization will negatively predict socio cultural adaptation. This hypothesis was supported in the present study. Findings are consistent with the existing evidences in context. As the integration and assimilation are found positive acculturation attitudes that lead toward better socio-cultural adaptation while marginalization and separation portray the reverse scenario (Kosic, 2002). Similarly study with Mainland students found separated and marginalized individual during cross-cultural contact encounter greater difficulty to successfully adapt the new culture (Wang, 2015).

Second hypotheses stated that acculturative stress will negatively predict socio-cultural adaptation. This hypothesis was also supported in the present study. Current findings were in line with previous studies that show that the levels of socio-cultural adaptation decreased among sojourners who experienced acculturative stress (Mahmood, 2014). A number of acculturation researches tried to identify the factors that come under the umbrella of acculturative stressors such as perceived discrimination, different system of education, communication difficulty, losing close relations and financial issues. These all negatively influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation (Bentley, 2008; Kaczmarek et al., 1994; Yang & Clum, 1995). Similarly Eustace (2007) found international students experiencing higher level of acculturative stress report greater difficulties in adjusting with a new society.

The final hypothesis stated that cross-cultural capital will be positively correlated with socio-cultural adaptation. This hypothesis was also supported. People exposed to a culture different from their own have a high need for capabilities to understand the values and behavior systems of the new culture. They must know how to maintain effective interaction with host nationals and how cross cultural conflicts can be settled effectively so that effective adjustment can be ensured (Wilson, 2013). According to Hong, Morris, Chiu and Benet-Martinez (2000) the knowledge of host culture schemas, values, norms and behavior are essential for functional adaptation.

Implications

The present study made a worthy addition in the existing literature by examining the predictors of socio-cultural adaptation that are found under representative variables in cross-cultural adaptation researches regardless of its importance (Mehmood, 2014). Moreover, cross-cultural transition is always fraught with a number of challenges and unexpected problems thus understanding the process of adjustment and associated factors that increase or decrease its level are very important for effective adjustment of academic sojourners in host society. In the light of these findings, host culture universities can facilitate the process of adaptation by initiating such programs and activities that promote social interaction between academic sojourners and domestic students and help sojourners to learn more about the local culture. Moreover, the present study may help sojourners to enhance their knowledge regarding the local cultural and adapt positive attitudes of acculturation to face the challenges of cross cultural transition.

Limitations and future suggestions

The major limitation of the present study was the limited sample that was based on only Chinese students. China has good diplomatic relations with Pakistan for almost 65 years thus their acculturation experience may vary more than the sojourners from the rest of the world such as SAARC countries, Afghanistan and Arab countries. This may affect the generalization potential of

current findings. Future researchers are recommended to include students belonging to different cultures of origin. In addition, the study was based on a cross sectional survey research design in which internal validity is always compromised. In future researches, mixed designs should be used. Moreover, self-reported data collected through self-report scales can also be a plausible cause for socially desirable data which leaves data vulnerable for erroneous inferences. All these limitations must be addressed on priority basis while conducting research in future on similar constructs. Besides these limitations, the present study is an initiative to understand the process of adaptation in the indigenous context.

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