

Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out whether the international students coming from more culturally different countries suffer more acculturative stress than those coming from a country closer in culture to Ireland. The present research results suggest that Asian international students suffer higher levels of acculturative stress when compared with European international students.

Introduction

The number of international students choosing Ireland as their destination is growing (IHE, 2012). The “cultural distance” between the two cultures is a factor related to acculturative stress that international students may suffer. Acculturative stress is the disorientation that often accompanies cross-cultural transitions (Berry, 1997).

Constantine (2004) and Berry (1997; 2005; 2006) believe that the cultural distance between the societies of origin and settlement is of great importance in the study of the acculturation process. Inglehart and Welzel’s world cultural map shows the cultural differences and similarities between countries (Inglehart & Osyserman, 2004).

Constantine’s et al (2004) and Poyrazli’s et al (2010) studies in the USA found that European international students have lower levels of acculturative stress than Asian international students. Wei et al. (2012) believes that self-confidence in English ability, rather than actual English ability helps in the adjustment of East Asian international students in the United States.

The aim of this study is to find out whether the international students coming from more culturally different countries suffer from higher acculturative stress than those coming from a country closer in culture to Ireland. Therefore the aim of this research is to find out whether international students who have higher levels of self-reported English fluency experience lower levels of acculturative stress than those international students who express lower levels of self-reported English fluency.



The **methods** for data collection were: the Sandhu and Asradabi (1994) questionnaire the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS) The Self-reported Fluency of English Scale (SRFES). Socio-demographic variables chosen to be measured were inserted in the questionnaire, i.e., age, gender, nationality, and length of residence in Ireland.

Convenient sample technique was used to choose the participants who were International undergraduate and graduate college students from third level education colleges in Dublin. Of the 122 number of participants 53 were males and 69 were females. Age range goes from 18 to 30. Demographic features were: European international (students from France, Spain and Italy) students were 73, and 48 Asian international students (China, Korea, Oman, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia). Analysis will aim to find the level of acculturative stress in international students and the differences seen between students from countries more culturally close to Ireland and those more culturally different. Analysis will also aim to find the relationship between the level of acculturative stress and the level of self-reported English fluency, as well as the gender of the participants. SPSS version (IBM Corp., 2013) was used for data analysis. Quantitative survey design is used for the dissertation using a questionnaire and research design of quasi-experimental correlation approach. DBS strict ethical guidelines have been followed while writing the dissertation

Results The combination between Inglehart’s and Berry’s theories is an original contribution by this present research project which purpose is to analyse the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: European international students will have lower levels of acculturative stress than Asian international students. An Independent Samples T-test found that there was a statistically significant difference in mean scores on the level of acculturative stress between European international students and Asian international students $t(119) = -7.153, p < .01$. Therefore, the null hypothesis can be rejected with a 99% confidence level.

Hypothesis 2: higher levels of self-reported English language fluency will predict lower levels of acculturative stress. A Spearman’s rho correlation analysis found a small significant negative correlation between total score from the Acculturative Stress and Self-reported English Proficiency ($r = -0.199, N = 121, sig. (2-tailed) = 0.26, p < .05$) with high levels of Acculturative Stress associated with lower levels of Self-reported English Proficiency.

Discussion

The results confirmed that International students suffer a moderate level of acculturative stress. Asian international students suffer higher levels of acculturative stress than European international students, perhaps because international European students find Irish culture more similar to their own culture than Asian international students do (Constantine et al., 2004; Inglehart & Osyserman, 2004).

High levels of acculturative stress is significantly associated with lower levels of English proficiency. This suggests that the confidence in ones’ ability to speak the host language, facilitate the establishment of social relationships which could help international students to adapt successfully in a host country (Wei et al. 2012).

References

- Berry, J.W. (1997) Immigration, Acculturation, and Adaptation. *Applied Psychology: an International Review*. 46[1] pp.5-68.
- Inglehart, R. & Osyserman, D. (2004). *Individualism, Autonomy and Self-Expresion: the HumanDevelopmentSyndrome*. http://sitemaker.umich.edu/culture.self/files/inglehart_oyserman_2004.pdf.