

International Student's Academic Achievement: Contribution of Gender, Self-efficacy and Socio-cultural Adjustment

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Received: September 22, 2014 Accepted: January 20, 2015 Online Published: April 20, 2015

doi:10.5539/ass.v11n10p153

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n10p153>

Abstract

International students who pursue their education in other country have to cope various challenges related to their adjustment. Successful adjustment to higher learning institution becomes an important issue, failure to which may hinder self-efficacy and their academic achievement. Aim of current research is to investigate the influence of self-efficacy, and socio-cultural adjustment on their academic achievement among International students in Malaysia. Two hundreds International students were randomly selected from the Kuala Lumpur, Out of these 100 belongs to male and 100 belong to female category. The age range of the respondents are 17 to 27 years (Mean=20.55). Various psychological constructs were used to assess the studied variables. Correlational and regression statistical analysis were applied. Findings reveal significant positive correlation in academic achievement with socio-cultural adjustment and self-efficacy. Gender, self-efficacy and socio-cultural adjustment significantly predicts students' academic achievement. Findings proved gender, self-efficacy and socio-cultural adjustment significantly effecting International student's academic achievement among International students in Malaysia. Implications for International students are significant in terms of countering adjustment problems by developing self-efficacy and cultural values as a result academic achievement may improve.

Keywords: socio-cultural adjustment, self-efficacy and academic achievement

1. Introduction

Asians valued academic achievement highly as it is perceived as one of the few avenues for upward mobility (Gloria & Ho, 2003; Sue & Okazaki, 1990). Not meeting one's own expectations and encouragement is a serious matter which could potentially leads to loss of confidence and support from one's family (Khan, 2012; Yeh & Huang, 1996). In educational context, existing relationship has been observed between academic achievement and several factors that likely affect success, including motivation, parental involvement (Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992), encouragement (Evans, 1997), encouragement with respect to education in particular (Catsambis, 1998).

International student's plays significant role in multi-culture based society by delivering various cultures and perception in the host country. Brisset et al. (2010) found that shifting to another country for getting education happening commonly incidence. International students those who decide to do their studies in a overseas country have to cope with their adjustment. Such students need to deal with the changes between culture of their hosts and their own culture (Ang & Liamputtong, 2008). It has been reported by previous researchers that foreign students go through the process of adjustment to newly developed education set up (Misra et al., 2003). New environment's adjustment could be taxing process (Sumer et al., 2008) for overseas students definitely have the intensified stress for their adjustment to new environment. The school emphasizes systematic, organization of activities which are largely based on achievement and performance so academic achievement considered main norms to justify potential capabilities. In Asian context, parents hope their children will get good grades because it is important in getting a good job. For example, there is an old proverb in Chinese "Everything is unworthy except studying" (cited in Khan, 2012). Therefore, it is demanding for the students to have high academic grades. Researchers have explored the links between variety of factors and academic achievement, such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), cultural expectations (Ginsburg, 1992), and gender (Gibbons, 2000) are likely to influence international students' success. Since Malaysian culture represent diverse multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society (Verkuyten & Khan, 2012; Janssens et al., 2014).

1.1 Self-efficacy and Academic Achievement

Self-efficacy denotes people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance, which influence over events that affect their lives (Bandura, 1977). It is believed that person experience greater self-efficacy leads to found greater ambitions (Cited in Khan, 2013), continue in chasing those goals, set even additional aims when previous aims fulfilled, and involve more often in task related actions. Academic achievement refers to the successes and failures met by individuals in their classes-i.e., at school, college or university. Whereas academic development is associated with gradual processes in achievement from year to year, while academic achievement encompasses enhancement, self-actualization and some forms of competitiveness (Maslow & Murphy, 1954). Existing research has shown that academic achievement is closely linked to self-efficacy (Komarraju & Nadler, 2013).

1.2 Gender and Academic Achievement

Gender variables play an important role, which contribute in Asian's academic achievement (Khan, 2012). Earlier studies proven the presence of different forms in male and female, such as female incline to give higher importance to strengthen achievement (Alshemmeri et al., 2011; Lightbody, Siann, Stocks, & Walsh, 1996), boys believe higher in skill and fortune as causes of performance (Burgner & Hewstone, 1993). Relation of academic achievement exists with gender (Fergusson & Horwood, 1997).

A number of studies have highlighted the positive effects of parental involvement in school experiences and academic affairs (Lee, 1994; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996), in the supervision and monitoring of children's academic progress (Astone & McLanahan, 1991; & Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996), and, to a lesser extent, in school-related activities (Epstein, 1992; Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996) such as parent-teacher conferences (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). Moreover, parents influence their children's achievement through their direct involvement in school-related activities, such as helping with homework and course selection, as well as through implicitly and explicitly encouraging school success by setting and maintaining high standards. Indeed, considerable research in the tradition of the Wisconsin Status Attainment Model (e.g., Sewell & Hauser, 1980) has suggested that parental encouragement is the primary mediator of the well-established connection between family social class and student academic achievement. It becomes important to know the issues most comprised in a positive adjustment and how it might influence the students' academic achievement.

Hypothesis 1: There will be positive correlation on international students' self-efficacy, socio-cultural adjustment and academic achievement.

Hypothesis 2: Gender, Social Efficacy and Socio-Cultural Adjustment will be important contributing factor for Academic Achievement.

2. Method

2.1 Sample and Procedure

Two hundred International students were randomly selected from the public university of Malaysia, from which 100 were boys and 100 were girls, their age varies 17 to 27 years. Before starting collection of data, participant's consent was granted. Respondents were given instructions containing objective of the questionnaire and how to complete the instrument form. Respondents were not allowed to mention their name and respondents were assured by the researchers that their identity will not be disclosed.

2.2 Instruments

2.2.1 Socio Cultural Adaptation Scale

SCAS prepared by Ward & Kennedy (1999) with 29 items by means of five-point Likert measure ranged 1 means not difficult to 5 means extreme difficult. Scores found from this measure designated the participants' view once confronting problems of perception of Malaysian morals and cultural values (Hamdan et al., 2014; Ghani et al., 2014). Example instrument questions comprised declarations like "Understanding jokes and humors" etc. This instrument encompasses in 2 separate elements. First element covers respondents' Behavioural Adaptation Difficulty consists of twenty two questions and the other part measures the Cognitive-Adaptation Difficulty with 7 items. Greater values obtained in the scale declared higher difficulty in socio-cultural adaptation. In the current study, the overall reliability of the scale was established excellent ($\alpha = .95$); the 7-items cognitive-adaptation difficulty ($\alpha = .93$) and the twenty two items on behavioural-adaptation difficulty ($\alpha = .97$) were found reliability excellent.

2.2.2 Cross-cultural Social-efficacy

CCSE developed by (Fan & Mak, 1998) were used to measure cross-cultural social-efficacy of students

responded to a seven-point instrument ranged 1 means *strongly agree* to seven means *strongly disagree*. Example questions consist like “I feel confident asking a lecturer a question” etc. This scale consists of 20-items with four subscales: Absence of Social Difficulties, Sharing Interests, Friendship Initiative and Social Confidence. Each subscale can be calculated separately. The overall scale’s reliability was .89 in the current research, researchers found Cronbach alpha reliability of .96, .85, .94, and .92 indicate reliability for subscales respectively.

2.2.3 Academic Achievement

The dependent variable was the students’ academic achievement based on students’ academic CGPA.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by correlational and regression analysis using spss 17 version.

3. Results

Table 1. Mean, cronbach’s alpha, correlations of dimensions of social efficacy, socio-cultural adjustment and academic achievement

| Variables | M | α | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|---|
| Behavioral Adaptation Difficulty (1) | 4.55 | .96 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Cognitive-Adaptation Difficulty (2) | 4.67 | .94 | .62** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Social efficacy (3) | 5.36 | .97 | .52** | .51** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Absence of Social Difficulties (4) | 5.39 | .96 | .49** | .54** | .75** | 1 | | | | | |
| Social Confidence (5) | 5.12 | .85 | .56** | .59** | .61** | .79** | 1 | | | | |
| Sharing Interests (6) | 8.28 | .94 | .32** | .31** | .23* | .25* | .24* | 1 | | | |
| Friendship Initiative (7) | 7.98 | .92 | .67** | .84** | .32* | .71** | .41* | .23* | 1 | | |
| Socio-cultural adjustment (8) | 7.61 | .85 | .33** | .32** | .23* | .25* | .24* | .24* | .22* | 1 | |
| Academic Achievement (9) | 4.65 | .89 | .77** | .94** | .22* | .74** | .43* | .28* | .34* | .33* | 1 |

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 2. Predictor variables gender, self-efficacy and socio-cultural adjustment

| Model | β | SEM | t | p |
|---------------------------|---------|------|--------|-------|
| Construct | 3.401 | .326 | 10.431 | .000* |
| Gender | .631 | .018 | -3.19 | .000* |
| Self-efficacy | .055 | .017 | -3.148 | .002 |
| Socio-cultural Adjustment | .349 | .039 | -3.79 | .000 |

Dependent variable is Academic Achievement

R-Square: .282

4. Discussion

Table 1 Reported Pearson correlations between variables tabulated in a matrix shows positive correlations between same variables were perfect. Higher self-efficacy, socio-cultural adjustment correlate with higher academic achievement, evidence says self-efficacy was linked with self-regulation, cognitive abilities, adjustment and motivation (Paunonen & Hong, 2010; Zajacova et al., 2005). Academic achievement was linked with motivation and socially responsiveness (Patrick et al., 1997). On the basis of Bandura’s (1977) self-efficacy theoretical concept, cross-cultural self-efficacy is a valuable contributing factor for socio-cultural adjustment.

Table 2 Representing regression results for gender, social efficacy and socio-cultural adjustment, which present an important result on the academic achievement in the international student’s. The gender was showing the best predictor for academic achievement for the international students. R square demonstrating predictor’s variables i.e., Gender, self-efficacy and socio-cultural adjustment were contributed 28.2% in the academic achievement. It is believed that students extremely socially anxious incline to diminish their shared performance (Clark & Wells,

1995). Asonibare and Olayonu (1997); Bandura (1986, 1997); Khan et al. (2014) endorsed that self-efficacy predict students' academic achievement.

High efficacy develops ability to cope with life challenges (Khan & Husain, 2012) and help to counter academic situations and problems, which intern improve their adjustment problems and academic success (Poyrazli et al., 2002). International students, as they express shared in addition to their exclusive difficulties like ethnic bias, linguistic problems, household difficulties, economic strain, confusions, and isolations (Lin & Yi, 1997). Moreover, belong to dissimilar culture of overseas students could not escape from culture shock and in facing frequent difficulties (Oudenhoven & Zee, 2002; Pruitt, 1978). Current research suggests higher self-efficacy considered to be contributing factor for successful adjustment of International students, as they considered important role in making culturally diverse society. As a result of their successful adjustment in university setting in turn may possibly improve their academic achievement.

Educational encouragement represents one potentially influential factor, and a substantial body of research has examined the influence of encouragement on academic achievement. Dreikurs (1971) has regarded the ability to encourage a child as the most important element in raising a child in a democracy. Experiences with receiving encouragement are important contributors to the ability to interact successfully in both personal and professional domains (Dinkmeyer & Losoncy, 1996). Evans (2005) described encouragement as positive feedback directed primarily at the effort or improvement demonstrated by an individual, rather than at the outcome per se; this process-over-content focus promotes self-worth, irrespective of the actual results of a particular endeavor.

5. Conclusion

Overall finding suggests International students confidence helps them to motivate in higher educational aspirations and academic achievement. Our study demonstrated there is factors influence on International student's adjustment, as an intervention university may offer International students support services like mentoring and counseling programs (Khan et al., 2014; Khan & Kalu, 2011) for better adjustment in Malaysian society and culture to international students, as a result their adjustment difficulties may reduce.

Acknowledgements

Author would like to thanks to Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) for providing financial support for this study.

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