MALAYSIAN STUDENTS' SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT TO THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS IN EGYPT, MOROCCO, AND JORDAN

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Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study examines the social adjustment of Malaysian students studying in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. Quantitative, comparative and case study methods were used.

Methodology: Through the questionnaire, in which the social adjustment of the students to the university campus was defined, a total of 587 questionnaires were answered by Malaysian students studying in the three countries. SPSS software was used to carry out the calculation of the mean, t-test, ANOVA and Tukey HSD analysis.

Main Findings: The outcome of the analysis shows that Malaysian male and female students reached the medium level of social adjustment in the three countries. The differences in the means of female and male responses have no significance. Malaysian student's adjustment to the class climate was higher than that of the environment outside. Malaysian students more adjusted with a university campus in Jordan and Egypt than they are in Morocco.

Applications of this study: This study showed a view of conditions Malaysian students in Jordan, Morocco, and Egypt. It will be helpful for students, universities, teachers to be aware of foreign students' social adjustment issues and pay more attention to this particular problem.

Novelty/Originality of this study: This paper found Malaysian students are more adjusted to the university campus in Jordan and Egypt than they are in Morocco. This suggests that Morocco is a better destination for study for Malaysian students as long as the social adjustment is concerned.

Keywords: Social Adjustment, Academic Achievement, University Campus, Malaysian Students, International Student.

INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the students' movement between countries has increased significantly, particularly in Asia. Some Asian countries such as Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Malaysia have been competing to become an international education hub and to attract more foreign students. In 2014, 75,000 foreign students were registered in Singaporean universities. The number of foreign students enrolled in Malaysian universities increased from 90,000 students in 2012 to more than 150,000 in 2015 (Clark, 2015). Nevertheless, the direction of the student flow of these countries is not only inward. These countries send a significant number of their students to study overseas. The balance between the inward and outward number of students varies from country to country. Malaysia, however, receives and sends a large number of students every year. The students' movement benefits both the host country and the guest students. The host country benefits from direct and indirect financial gains. Large numbers of local students have the opportunity to share experiences and views with students who belong to other cultures, religions, and ethnicities and consequently, to develop their skills in working with people from different backgrounds (Wu et al., 2015). On the other hand, the guest students gain a wide range of benefits. They have the opportunity to learn about other cultures, enhance their own self-confidence and personal growth, experience living independently, develop a network of international people and develop better career prospects and potential international employment opportunities (Bamber, 2014; Calder et al., 2016; Tseng & Newton, 2002). However, the transition period from secondary school to university aboard can be such stressful for some students, especially after going through the dependent stage at home or in school where they have to abide by the rules laid down by parents and the school, and many students even withdraw before graduation (Perry et al., 2001; Tinto, 1996).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant studies, however, point out that those international students face challenges as they pursue their education abroad (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011; Özturgut & Murphy, 2009; Wu et al., 2015). They face obstacles related to matters ranging from daily life to culture, such as finance, living circumstances, balancing work, food, language, learning style (Wu et al., 2015). Tseng & Newton (2002) classified those challenges into four categories: Adjusting to general living conditions, personal-psychological adjustment, adjusting to the academic environment and socio-cultural adjustment. The first category includes adjusting to various types of systems that are new to an international student in the host country. The systems usually include weather/climate, transportation, health care, food, and housing, cultural and new values. Personal and psychological adjustment includes issues that emerge from being away from homes such as feelings of isolation and loneliness, depression, homesickness, and frustration. Difficult entering a new educational system, language learning problems, and acquiring new learning strategies constitute the challenges of adjusting to the new academic environment. Social adjustment, is, according to (Gong & Fan, 2006) and (Kağnıcı, 2012) the most difficult and the one which the international student mostly faces for a long time in the new country. This adjustment is a process of

exploring and making proper adaptation into an unknown set of social relations, values, norms, beliefs and institutions inside and outside the educational institution campus (Clinciu & Cazan, 2014).

The literature reveals that the social adjustment of international students to the life of the university campus encompasses the engagement in co-curricular and on-campus socialization activities (McFaul, 2016). There is an overwhelming agreement in the research on the vitality of the involvement of the international students in co-curricular activities to the learning process. A large number of studies have shown that the international student's participation in activities that extend outside of the classroom contributes positively to learning and significantly impacts on the sense of belonging and social adjustment (Glass, 2014; Hommes et al., 2012).Studies concerning social adjustment to the university campus built up their research framework on social network theory concepts. The studies depended on social network analysis to draw their conclusions (Glass, 2014; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Hommes et al., 2012; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Rienties et al., 2013) Various quantitative and qualitative research techniques were used ranging from interviews to focus groups to research questionnaire. In their studies, Montgomery and McDowell (2009) and Rienties et al. (2013) adopted focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews. Their analysis included a graphical representation. Another study on Undergraduate Student Experience: Inside and Outside the Classroom, by (Lehto et al., 2014), used a secondary source of information student's survey. The criteria for this study were: Interactions with faculty and academic staff, satisfaction with academic experience, involvement with identity-based organizations, sense of belonging, perception of campus climate and leadership efficacy.

There is a wide range of factors that influence the adjustment process of international students in the host environment. Pre-entry characteristics of the student such as gender, socioeconomic status, and learning history of the student like high school GPA, were identified by a model developed by (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) as influential factors to the student's adjustment process. Other studies pointed to the student's age as an important factor in the adjustment process. Undergraduate international students are usually in their emerging adulthood. According to Social Relations Theory, which was developed in the context of western industrialized societies, emerging adulthood, is a period characterized by personal freedom and high exploration. In emerging adulthood the person begins to strive for independence and self-sufficiency (Youniss & Smollar, 1987). A recent study of the factors that affect the decision making of international students to study abroad has found that even those students from countries other than the western industrialized countries, meet the features of emerging adulthood and share the main features of this period; identity exploration, self-focus, instability and optimism (Chavoshi et al., 2017). The adulthood features may play a positive role in the adjustment process. Some other factors such as high self-esteem, satisfaction with life, physical and mental health symptomology, mood states, coping with everyday activities, feelings of acceptance, and social interaction with host nationals, were noted by such studies as (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Chirkov et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2008; Matsumoto et al., 2004; Savicki et al., 2004; Stone Feinstein & Ward, 1990). Person-Environment Fit (PEF) Theory attributes some of the negative outcomes experienced during the student's adjustment process to the university, to shortcomings in the opportunities provided by the social and academic environment. A mismatch between individual and developmental needs of the students and the university environment negatively impacts upon motivation, interest and performance of the students (Eccles et al., 1996).

To overcome the challenges of international students' adjustment to the host environment, the students need familiarization programs. (Abdullah et al., 2009; Chen & Chen, 2009; Ismail et al., 2015). The programs may focus on developing social skills, educating new students on cultural issues, and establishing positive relationships and communication with others. Understanding the cultural issues involved in higher education facilitates the adjustment of fresh students. These important point needs to be considered by international students' affairs offices at the host university. A special division for cultural aspects may be established where students of various cultural backgrounds can meet, discuss and exchange views and consequently develop their social networks (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011). Other initiatives can be made by the host university. A Proper understanding of the needs of international students by the university, faculty, and staff could help in effectively providing supportive on-campus resources and services. The University needs to be prepared to support international students not only academically but also socially and culturally. In recent studies, social media appears as a significant tool to strengthen the relations between university students, positively enhance the feeling towards the university and consequently make the adjustment easier. (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

At present, a large number of Malaysian students study in various universities of the world; most of which are under various government scholarship programs. This trend is likely to continue in the coming years (The Malaysian time, 2013). The United States has the largest share of Malaysian students studying abroad. In the academic year 2014/2015, there were 7,231 Malaysian students studying in American universities and colleges (USA embassy in Malaysia, 2015). The Arab countries of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco are among the preferable places for Malaysian students to study. In 2017, 11,000 Malaysian students were studying in Egyptian universities. The number of Malaysian students in Jordan was 1608 in 2010, with another 1000 registered for the academic year 2011. They were studying medicine, dentistry, Islamic Jurisprudence, Arabic and Islamic Theology (Jordan Times, 2010). International Malaysian students receive necessary and adequate support and services from the concerned Malaysian authorities to enable them to face the multiple challenges and stress in the academic and social environment of the country of study and adjust to them (Affandi et al., 2007).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Only a few studies, carried out in Malaysia could be traced to the issues of the international Malaysian students face in the country of the study. Not even a comparative study has been found. Ninggal (2000) studied culture shock and fear issues among Malaysian students in U.S. colleges and universities. They found that Malaysian students did not receive sufficient attention and support in addressing their academic and social needs when they first arrived in the United States. (Ismail et al., 2013) investigated Malaysian students' academic, social and urban environment adjustment in Jordanian universities and its correlation with their academic achievement. The study revealed that various dimensions of Malaysian students' adjustment reached an acceptable level and the academic achievement positively correlates with each of the adjustments, but the relationship is very low. Another study by (Ismail et al., 2015) proved a positive correlation between the Malaysian students' social adjustment and their practice of the Arabic language in the universities of Jordan.

The above discussion brings about some clear facts that could strongly justify the need for this study. International student's social adjustment to the university campus is a key factor for better academic achievement. In addition, there has been limited empirical research on the experience of international Malaysian students and their transition and adjustment in the country of the study.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to examine the social adjustment of Malaysian students studying abroad by comparing the adjustment of the students in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. To reach this aim, the following questions were made.

1- What is the level of social adjustment of Malaysian students to the university campus in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco?

2- Are there any statistically significant differences in social adjustment to the university campus among Malaysian students studying in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco based on their gender?

3- Are there any statistically significant differences in social adjustment to the university campus among Malaysian students based on the country of study (Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan)?

METHODOLOGY

To reach the above aim and objectives, quantitative, comparative and case study methods are used. The required data were collected through a questionnaire in which the social adjustment of the students to the university campus was developed based on the study of (Ismail et al., 2013) where a set of 16 questions on activities inside and outside the classroom were defined. The reliability of the Social Adjustment Questionnaire was checked with Cronbach's alphas for the 16 items questions. The sample of this study was selected randomly from universities in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. A total of 587 questionnaires were answered by Malaysian students studying in Egypt, Morocco, and Jordan. Out of the total number of questionnaires, 287 were distributed in the Egyptian universities of Cairo University, Al Azhar University, Tanta and Alexandria University; 182 questionnaires were given to Malaysian students who were studying in Yarmouk, Mu'tah and Alalbait in Jordan; and 118 questionnaires were answered by the students of Rabat, Marrakesh and Mohammadeyah Universities in Morocco. SPSS software was used to carry out the calculation of the mean, t-test and ANOVA and Tukey HSD analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To investigate the level of social adjustment reached by Malaysian students to the university campus in the three countries, we calculated the mean of the scores of the students in each country. The analysis shows that the mean of both Malaysian male and female students were medium. This can be interpreted that the level of social adjustment to the university campuses in the three countries of Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco is medium, refer to Table 1. This result answers the first question. The Mean of the male students' responses reached 3.55 while the Mean of the female students' responses is 3.40. This outcome is in line with the outcome of the study of Ismail et.al (2015) on Malaysian students' study in Jordan. They concluded that Malaysian students in Jordan do not enjoy a high level of social adjustment.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations scores on the Social Adjustment by gender variable

GENDER	MEAN	N	SD
Male	3.5	287	.65150
Female	3.4	300	.62906

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

The differences in the means of female and male responses have no significance. This is proved by carrying out the T-test ($a > 0.05$). The outcome of the T-test is presented in Table 2. The absence of the difference between the means can be interpreted as there is no significant difference between the social adjustment level reached by male students and that reached by female students in the three countries of Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. Here, the second question has been

answered. This result is supported by (Ismail et al., 2015) who found that although Malaysian male students achieved better social and academic adjustment than the Malaysian female students in Jordan, the differences between the two groups were not statistically significant. However, (Cook, 1995) pointed out that female students face a lot of problems during the adjustment and the establishment of relations on campus compared with male students. Other authors such as (Furnham & Bochner, 1986) who reached a similar conclusion, suggested intensifying training programs for the development of social skills for females.

Table 2: Results of Independent Sample T-test analysis for the difference between the means of Male and Female Students in Social Adjustment in the three countries

Dependent Variable	DF	F	Sig.
Gender	1.472	.225	1.472

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

Table 3 presents the level of social adjustment reached by male and female students in each criterion in the three countries. This table shows that male students and female students hold a high level of adjustment in the items of 1, 3, 4, and 12. The highest amongst these items is item number 3 where the level of adjustment of male students reached as high as 4.05 and female students scored 4.18. Female students are a bit higher than male students. The level of adjustment in the other items is moderate; the lowest level was reached in item number 10 where the mean of the female students was 2.88 and 2.44 respectively. Female students, however, are lower than male students. These results point out the Malaysian student's adjustment in the class climate was higher than that of the environment outside except for item number 10 this score indicates the lower level that Malaysian students feel about the respect the student receives from the lecturers. It seems that the students' feeling is caused by the students' poor social initiatives and not because of the lecturer's practices. This is supported by the score of item number 12 where students expressed their high confidence in their lecturers' capabilities to properly handle foreign students. The poor social initiatives are a result of the Malaysian students' nature which is characterized by shyness as concluded by (Michael, 2013).

When considering the social adjustment of Malaysian students in each country, one can see that the mean of the responses of the students in Jordan is the highest (3.601) while the lowest level was reached by Malaysian students in Morocco (3.21). Refer to Table 4. To examine the differences between social adjustment levels reached by Malaysian students in the three countries, we ran an ANOVA test. The outcome of this test is presented in Table 5. As can be seen in this table, there are significant differences in the respondents of Malaysian students in the universities of Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan. To test the differences we ran the Tukey HSD analysis.

Table (6) shows the outcome of the Tukey analysis. This table indicates that there is a significant difference between Morocco and Egypt in favour of Egypt. There is also a significant difference between Morocco and Jordan in favor of Jordan. There is no significant difference between Jordan and Egypt. These results answer the third question and indicate that Malaysian students are more adjusted to the university campus in Jordan and Egypt than they are in Morocco. The number of Malaysian students who are studying in Jordan and Egypt, which is much larger than it is in Morocco supports this outcome. It seems that the impact of western colonization on language and culture in Morocco affects the preference of Malaysian students who find Jordan and Egypt a more suitable Islamic environment.

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, Sample size by gender for criteria for measuring social adjustment in the three countries

Item No.	Criteria for measuring social adjustment	Gender	n	MEAN	SD
1	I have the ability to face learning difficulties and overcome them	Male	287	3.69	.91800
		Female	300	3.70	.90521
		Total	587	3.69	.91071
2	I have difficulty completing academic assignments.	Male	287	3.52	.93785
		Female	300	3.2367	1.03484
		Total	587	3.3782	.99833
3	I try my best to keep my studies going.	Male	287	4.0523	.84914
		Female	300	4.1833	.80740
		Total	587	4.1193	.82996
4	I joined a religious study halaqah conducted at a mosque or university.	Male	287	3.8084	.97962
		Female	300	3.6500	1.07922
		Total	587	3.7274	1.03389
5	Enjoy satisfaction to discuss academic affairs and achievements.	Male	287	3.5087	1.04735
		Female	300	3.4233	1.05253
		Total	587	3.4651	1.04997
6	Participated in a recreational activity organized by the university.	Male	287	3.3519	1.20235
		Female	300	3.0600	1.26824

		Total	587	3.2027	1.24401
7	I am following the program of study / halaqahtahfiz Al-Quran.	Male	287	3.4460	1.15709
		Female	300	3.2367	1.31647
		Total	587	3.3390	1.24447
8	I tried to find a lecturer at his office when the situation needed.	Male	287	3.4495	1.15422
		Female	300	3.4400	1.10020
		Total	587	3.4446	1.12598
9	I was wrong to ask a question when the course went	Male	287	3.2753	1.14240
		Female	300	3.1967	1.19278
		Total	587	3.2351	1.16809
10	I feel that lecturers do not respect me properly.	Male	287	2.8885	1.27979
		Female	300	2.4467	1.22153
		Total	587	2.6627	1.26869
11	I feel happy when someone else asks me about my academic matters.	Male	287	3.6411	1.01395
		Female	300	3.4967	1.14354
		Total	587	3.5673	1.08361
12	I feel that lecturers have enough experience to interact with foreign students.	Male	287	3.8397	.96554
		Female	300	3.8300	1.02532
		Total	587	3.8348	.99570
13	I am trying to get involved in the lectures in college.	Male	287	3.6411	.95353
		Female	300	3.4967	1.08962
		Total	587	3.5673	1.02702
14	I like to participate in college student activities.	Male	287	3.7108	1.02929
		Female	300	3.4867	1.13171
		Total	587	3.5963	1.08772
15	I feel happy classmates if I'm with them.	Male	287	3.6411	.88901
		Female	300	3.4400	.97102
		Total	587	3.5383	.93645
16	I feel the pressure of feeling in the face of learning.	Male	287	3.3554	1.07376
		Female	300	3.0767	1.06202
		Total	587	3.2129	1.07594

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

Table 4: Means and standard deviations scores on Social Adjustment by Universities variable

UNIVERSITIES	N	MEAN	SD
Morocco	118	3.2140	.39022
Egypt	287	3.5004	.65719
Jordan	182	3.6016	.70754

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

Table 5: ANOVA on Social Adjustment by Universities variable

Dependent Variable	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Universities	2	5.572	14.029	.000

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

Table 6: Results of Tukey HSD analysis for the difference between the mean of Universities on Social Adjustment

(I)UNIVERSITY	(J) UNIVERSITY	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Morocco	Egypt	-.28645[*]	.06892	.000	-.4484	-.1245
	Jordan	-.38767[*]	.07449	.000	-.5627	-.2126
Egypt	Morocco	.28645[*]	.06892	.000	.1245	.4484
	Jordan	-.10121	.05972	.208	-.2415	.0391
Jordan	Morocco	.38767[*]	.07449	.000	.2126	.5627
	Egypt	.10121	.05972	.208	-.0391	.2415

Source: Data Processing with SPSS

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the social adjustment level reached by Malaysian students with the university campus in Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco. Adjustment in the classroom and outside the classroom was analyzed. The outcome of the analysis revealed three important facts. The first fact is that Malaysian male and female students reached a medium level of social adjustment in the three countries. The female responses mean is 3.4 and the male responses mean is 3.55. The differences in the means of female and male responses have no significance. The second fact is Malaysian students' adjustment to the class climate was higher than that of the environment outside. The score of female and male students was high in items 1, 3, 4 and12 which are relevant to the climate inside the classroom. The means of male student responses were 3.69, 4.05, 3.80 and 3.89 while the means of the female students' responses were 3.7, 4.18, 3.65 and 3.83 for 1,2,3,4 and 12 respectively. The third outcome is that Malaysian students are more adjusted to the university campus in Jordan and Egypt than they are in Morocco. This suggests that Egypt and Jordan constitute a better destination for study for Malaysian students as long as the social adjustment is concerned. The student's adjustment situation described by the first two facts needs special concern by concerned Malaysian authorities and those of host universities alike. To enhance and improve the level of social adjustment, Malaysian students need a familiarisation program when they reach the host university (Abdullah et al., 2009; Chen & Chen, 2009). The program should give special consideration to the cultural aspects of the host environment. Students need to improve their positive interaction with the campus environment. This will positively contribute to their academic performance. The host university needs to encourage and facilitate the participation of the students in co-curriculum activities and events on the campus. As for the third fact, if Malaysian authorities want to continue sending their students to Morocco, they need to work closely with university authority in this country. Both sides need to cooperate in preparing the students right from the early stage of the study. This study and other studies such as (Ismail et al., 2015) point to the importance of addressing the challenges of adjustment to the campus by the relevant educational institutions. The university concerned authorities, faculty management, and staff can investigate and recognize the needs of their international students and provide proper support.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

No study covers all aspects of the research problem. The author should discuss the limitations or gaps of this study. And also present future scope or plan of the study.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Dr. Wail Ismail has coordinated the research. He participated in preparing a literature review, data collection in Jordan, data analysis and paper writing. Dr. Zakaria Alcheikh Mahmoud's contribution was in preparing a literature review, data analysis, and paper writing. DR. Muhammad Azhar Zailaini participated in data collection in Egypt and Moroccu mand in data analysis. Di Xuan participated in data compilation and analysis.

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