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Cultural, Linguistic, and Emotional Adjustment: Adaptation of International Students into a U.S. College

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Purpose

In view of the challenges that international students faced and researches that made to address the problem (Gill, 2012), it is important to make aggregate analysis of international students adaptation into three main areas: cultural, linguistic and emotional. Implications and suggestion are discussed for institutions of higher education can help international students to adapt better, both socially and culturally, in new settings.

Research Questions

1. What challenges and stress do International students faced in adaptation to U.S. colleges?
2. What are international students’ perceptions of institutional support with regard to their adaptation?

Study Population

International students which study in the language program in a private, suburban, large university in northern United States. The university has approximately 11,400 students, and international students which are from 39 different countries accounted for more than 10% of the total student population (University of Dayton, 2013).

Data Collection

- Questionnaires were provided to possible participants (n=100), and choose the qualified participants based on their responds.
- Interviews consisting of 10 open-ended questions were given to 10 participants individually in regard to international students' challenges to adapt, and their perceptions of institutional supports.

Findings

Cultural Conflicts
- Culture shock and conflicts
- Religion beliefs and values
- Institutional culture difference
- Academic culture

Language Proficiency
- Communication skills
- Language barriers
- Academic achievement

Emotional stress
- Academic pressure
- Sense of loss of family and friends
- Feeling of loneliness & inferiority
- Discrimination

Challenges & Adjustment

Perception and Supports

- Institutional Services
- Academic Supports
- Social & Peer Supports
- Practical Supports Plan for Institution:
  - International Students Peer Program
  - International Student Advising
  - Global Partner Program

Implications

According to existing literature and this study, international students stress in language proficiency, cultural clash, values and conflicts, and emotional adaptation when studying in American colleges. In addition, implications could be shown from the results that institutional supports can facilitate international student adaptation in colleges. This leaves thoughts for office of international education and higher education administrators to develop and build supports, especially peer support networks, to help international students.

Selected References