Cross-Cultural Academic Experiences of International Students in Chinese Universities

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ABSTRACT

With an approximate concentration on how cultural differences impact their social and academic adaptation, this research examined the cross-cultural educational experiences of foreign students attending Chinese colleges. Disparities in social norms, communication methods, cultural values, and learning expectations were examined in relation to students' engagement in class, relationships with instructors, and assimilation into campus life. A quantitative research design was embraced, and information was collected through structured questionnaires administered to overseas students enrolled in Chinese universities to pursue higher education and the final sample size was 450. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS to identify meaningful relationships between cultural differences and pupils' educational experiences. The results revealed that cultural variations had a major impact on children's school adjustment, particularly in the areas of pedagogy, evaluation, and teacher-student interactions. Many students struggled to adjust to lecture-centred teaching, hierarchical classroom arrangements, and restricted classroom debate since they deviated from educational standards in their native countries. Misconceptions and a lack of confidence in academic endeavours were also caused by language barriers and indirect communication methods. Relationships with peers and a sense of belonging are influenced by cultural norms and values. In spite of these obstacles, the study discovered that cultural exposure led to improvements in the awareness, adaptability, and personal development of foreign students. Official aids, such as educational techniques and programs that were culturally sensitive, may help people of different cultures get along with one another. Cultural differences greatly affected overseas students' performance in Chinese colleges, the research found. Additionally, inclusive intercultural learning practices were stressed.

Keywords: Educational Experiences; Cultural Differences; International Students; Chinese Universities; Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

There are a lot of reasons for the growing number of foreign students choosing to attend college in China. These reasons include diplomatic, cultural, educational, and economic ones. China's economy is rising quickly, and the country is becoming more important on the international stage. Because of this, colleges in China may draw students from all over the world. The Belt and Road Initiative is considered a massive investment in China's cultural soft power. Moreover, it is one key reason why Chinese higher education for students from other nations is growing so quickly. Also, the reputation of the higher education system of China has grown rapidly, and it can now embrace students from all over the world. Students from all around the globe attend universities that are popularly regarded to be "double-first class" (Tian et al., 2022). Everyone agrees that quality matters most in higher education, and that statement holds true for every nation on Earth. Since the 1990s, Students from a wider range of backgrounds have been allowed into China's educational institutions. Throughout the whole of this decade, this trend has remained consistent. One further place where this pattern has been seen is at Chinese universities. The fact that China has been successful in attracting a significant number of international students from regions and countries that are generally seen as being slightly less fortunate is something that cannot be disputed. Rather than attending schools in English-speaking nations or in the developed world, where the language is more extensively used, it is possible that some kids from these countries may choose to attend schools in China. Alternatively, individuals may be compelled to relocate to

China as a result of external forces, which may force them to leave their existing place. A potential cause for this occurrence is the prevalence of isolationism and protectionism in nations located in the Western domain (Li, 2022).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In recent years, Chinese higher education institutions have seen a sharp rise in the proportion of globalised students enrolling. From 52,150 in 2017 to 492,185 in the year 2018, on the other hand, there were more global students got admission in different Chinese universities. This represents a significant growth. This translates to an annual growth rate of around 10%. Data from 1,004 Chinese institutions having foreign faculty members on staff were gathered in 2018. There are representatives from 192 different nations and regions among these students. In contemporary period, China has evolved as the top third most famous destination in the entire globe for international students to study abroad. Furthermore, it is the most populous Asian country that houses overseas students (Wang et al., 2024). While the proportion of international students admitted in non-degree universities is still large, the proportion of foreign pupils enrolling in China continuously increases. Furthermore, according to recent research, foreign pupils are dissatisfied with their time at Chinese universities, and some are concerned that Chinese universities are unable to monitor degree programs to meet the needs and expectations of international students for academic achievement. The quality certification system known as "Study-in-China" was established in 2015 by the Education Ministry in China. The respective Ministry recognised identified problems along with the statement that it would improve the program that the government has in place to ensure the quality of education obtained from schools located outside of China. According to the Quality Standards for Global Students in China at the Level of Tertiary Education (Trial), which were published in 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Education introduced these standards. These criteria, which researchers will refer to as "the Standards" from this point forward, were designed with the goal of controlling the education of international students at the level of individuals attending educational institutions (Hu & Zhu, 2022). However, it specifically is required to conduct an empirical evaluation of the influence of the standards.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

The current research study examined the educational experiences of foreign students in China, emphasising cultural inequalities in cross-cultural education. It examined the impact of students' diverse cultural backgrounds on their educational experiences and college life in China. The researcher deliberated about how different people express themselves and learn. The study aimed to enhance understanding of the influence of the respective cultural differences on academic preferences along with classroom dynamics. It looked at how students adapted to new ways of teaching, grading rules, and relationships with their teachers. The linguistic background, specifically how Mandarin and English affect confidence and involvement, was also looked at. Other important areas of attention were how well students got along with one another and how well they fit in with the community. Another goal of the research was to look at how cultural differences affect people's mental health and how happy they are with their school experience. Researchers observed campus surroundings that made people feel comfortable and accepted. It was speculated that engaging in peer networks and cultural exchange activities may help lower cultural stress. The research also looked at how institutional support may help people deal with cultural differences. The study also explored how culturally sensitive approaches may facilitate the engagement and adaptation of international students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Countries around the world are trying harder to make higher education more worldwide. It is important for growing foreign ability, encouraging people from different cultures to connect with each other, and advancing national interests. Previous research has looked at the main factors that affect how well Chinese short-term foreign students adapt to life in a different culture in terms of daily life, school, and mental health. The study's goal was to find out how

personal traits, social support, language skills, and cultural differences affected students' chances of adapting their learning during short trips abroad. Its goal was to give real information to help people understand the problems Chinese students face when they go to a short-term foreign school and to help host institutions come up with good plans for helping these students. Psychological, intellectual, and social flexibility were all found to be related and affected by each other in the study. Language skills affected the ability to learn and communicate. Cultural difference made mental stress and worries about adjusting worse. Children's mental health and ability to change improved with help from friends, teachers, and host towns. Having lived and worked abroad before and knowing other cultures helped with adaptation. Short-term students have big but temporary problems adapting because they don't get to fully experience a culture. The results showed that Chinese students studying abroad for a short time needed intellectual, social, and cross-cultural help to get used to living in other countries. The main goal of an earlier study was to look at how the different social situations in China and the US affected students' learning in active learning classes (Song & Xia, 2021). Examining the consequences of classroom expectations, communication styles, and cultural standards on students' engagement, communication, and engagement in active learning contexts was the aim of the previously conducted study. The findings of the respective research study demonstrated cross-cultural differences among classroom educational experiences. Chinese students participated less in open discussions and group activities due to cultural values of deference to authority and fear of making mistakes. For US students, peer and verbal engagement was simpler. Additionally, the study showed that supportive classrooms and learning settings decreased participation gaps. The results showed that inclusive and effective active learning was facilitated by culturally sensitive teaching methods. Another earlier research used an experiential learning technique to examine how recreational activities aided Chinese international students' socio-cultural adjustment (Zhang et al., 2022). Leisure activities taught individuals about different cultures and enhanced their intercultural competence in the innholder community. Students evaluated their lives outside of school in their leisure time. Leisure activities helped individuals adjust to social and cultural changes, research found. Kids learnt language, culture, and social skills via planned and spontaneous enjoyment. Research shows that interacting with people in the host community makes people more culturally aware and gives them a sense of connection. The findings showed that Chinese foreign students were better able to adapt to American culture when they learnt by doing in the leisure sector (Yang et al., 2023).

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do Cultural Differences impact International Students in different Chinese Universities?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher analysed each of the gathered quantitative data that had been obtained by employing SPSS version 25. Using the distinct 95% confidence interval along with odds ratio, researchers looked at the intensity along with direction of the statistical relationship between the chosen variables. The involved investigators used a significant p-value of around not more than 0.05 as a statistically significant criterion. An appropriate approach of conducting descriptive analysis had been used to indicate the most significant portions of the gathered data. To attempt to examine statistical data obtained from surveys and questionnaires, several statistical instruments were used. Quantitative approaches were common for these investigations.

Sampling

The study was conducted by the researcher using a basic random sample technique. Study participants had been requested to answer questionnaires for the study. After completion of the distribution of 550 questionnaires, researchers used the Rao-soft software to identify 430 individuals of the selected sample group. The researchers rejected 62 responses for being incomplete, resulting in a sample size of 450 out of 512.

Data and Measurement

The primary quantitative collection method of data used in the respective research investigation was the utilisation of a survey questionnaire. Th part two of the distinct survey enquired study respondents to provide score several characteristics of the both channels from online and offline by employing a predetermined 5-point Likert scale. Part one of the respective survey requested basic demographic information. An effective resources list, consisting mostly of different relevant online databases, supplied the required secondary data from the internet.
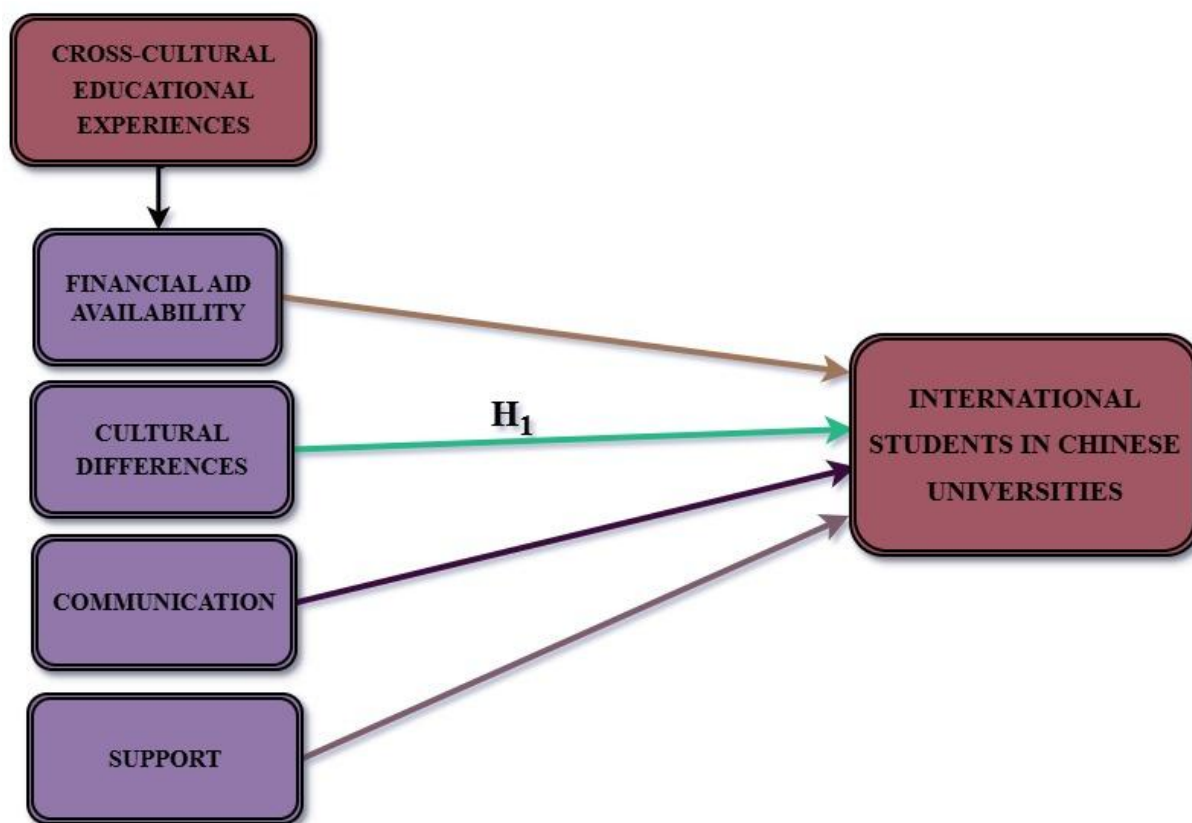
Statistical Software

For the completion of statistical analysis, the researcher used the software, SPSS 25 along with Microsoft Excel.

Statistical Tools

Descriptive analysis allowed involved researchers to understand the collected data's most important parts. The investigators employed ANOVA to examine the collected data.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

RESULT

- **Factor Analysis**

It is the goal of factor analysis (FA) to look for hidden elements in the statistical data. Ratings often make use of regression coefficients when there are not enough visible markers or affecting factors. Modelling is focused on potential weak points, infractions, and potentially obvious relationships. It is common practice to use the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test to assess data sets obtained from numerous regression studies. Conclusions drawn from the data show that the sample parameters and theoretical framework are an effective prediction tool. Duplicate data can be present in the dataset. Reduce the data size to make it easier to

read. A number between 0 and 1 is given to the researcher by KMO. Sample size is considered sufficient if KMO is in the range of 0.8 to 1.

As far as Kaiser is concerned, these are the safe thresholds: Here are the criteria that have been established by Kaiser:

A pitiful 0.050 to 0.059, below average 0.60 to 0.69. Middle grades often fall within the range of 0.70-0.79.

With a quality point score ranging from 0.80 to 0.89. They marvel at the range of 0.90 to 1.00.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Testing for KMO and Bartlett's Sampling Adequacy Measured by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin: 0.920

The results of Bartlett's test of Sphericity are as follows:

Approx. chi-square= 3252.968

df =190; sig =.000

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.920
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3252.968
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Most often, distinct number is used to classify the gathered information for the chosen sample. Scholars used the "Bartlett's Test of Sphericity" for ascertaining whether the significant correlation signals were statistically significant. Researchers are more confident in their sample when the projected "Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin" score is 0.920 or higher. The researcher's "Bartlett's Sphericity test," which accumulated a p-value of 0.00, revealed that the results were statistically significant. The correlation matrix supports the "Bartlett's Sphericity test" results, which were favourable.

❖ **INDEPENDENT VARIABLE**

● **Cross-Cultural Educational Experiences**

For students, cross-cultural educational experiences involve engaging with individuals from different regions. This may occur to students who pursue studies abroad or establish friendships with individuals from other nations. Each day, children should engage in activities that promote their mental well-being and spend time socialising with their peers. Their cultural heritage influences their manner of speech, their beliefs, and their behaviours. To adapt to a new educational culture, students must alter their behaviour and perspective. Culture has an impact on people's teaching and learning methods. It has an impact on student-teacher interactions, classroom conduct, and evaluation procedures (Vespestad & Smørvik, 2020). Discussion and debate are highly prized in certain cultures. Some highlight how crucial it is to pay attention to other people and follow directions. These differences should be known by students who take part in cross-cultural learning opportunities. This understanding helps students both mentally and socially. A lot of the time, organisations create these kinds of interactions. Academic counselling and programs for new students to help them get used to school make the process easier. When teachers use techniques that are open to everyone,

student involvement goes up. Cultural sharing events get people to talk to each other. In a loving environment, it is possible to feel less stressed and more at ease (Lou, 2023).

❖ **FACTOR**

● **Cultural Differences**

Cultural differences are the level of variance in values, beliefs, behaviours, and social norms among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. These variations shape how people perceive, communicate, and interact with others. Culture influences the norms and expectations about daily living. When individuals from different cultures interact, their cultural differences are highlighted and become more meaningful. There are several ways cultural variations can occur. One way is in communication methods. Some cultures encourage straightforward expression. Individuals appreciate language that is warm and friendly. Additionally, eye contact, tone of voice, and body language can all convey multiple meanings (Bai & Wang, 2024). Misunderstandings are more likely to happen when individuals perceive observed behaviours from their own cultural perspectives. Knowledge reduces misunderstandings and conflicts. Culture influences workplace and classroom expectations and behaviours. Everyone learns differently, and instructors employ imaginative methods. Styles of collaboration and work ethic can vary. These can be problematic. On the same note, they might bring new perspectives, which could improve collaboration. If cultural differences go unrecognised, there is the possibility of misunderstandings and conflict. Yet, they also lead to opportunities for growth and learning. Sharing and learning about another culture leads to empathy and understanding. It invites open-mindedness. The potential of the individual to adapt and work across cultural boundaries evolves (Gong et al., 2021).

❖ **DEPENDENT VARIABLE**

● **International Students in Chinese Universities**

International students in Chinese universities are people from other nations who come to China so they can attend for higher education. They sign up for a lot of different types of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. The students come from Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa. The fact that they exist suggests that universities in China are growing increasingly relevant across the globe. There are a number of reasons why international students choose Chinese universities. Many schools have excellent departments for business, technology, medicine, and engineering (Xu, 2022). In many countries, educational facilities cost less than they do in the West. Government scholarships and financing from universities also make it easier for individuals to get in. Programs taught in English make it easier for those who do not speak Chinese to get a higher education. Due to these things, students are encouraged to explore the globe. In Chinese institutions, international students may expect a personalised learning environment. Some ways of teaching are more structured and centred on tests. Lectures usually place a lot of emphasis on doing assignments and remembering what has been learnt. This method is easy to learn and well-organised for certain students. Some people require a longer time to get used to things. Each of their nations has its own academic standards. Students' performance and capacity to adjust both become better with time (Zhao & Xue, 2023).

➢ **Relationship between Cultural Differences and International Students in Chinese Universities:**

The relationship between cultural diversity and international students at Chinese universities is complex and important. Cultural differences have an influence on foreign students' daily life and academic performance in China. Differences in these domains affect learning, self-expression, and social interaction. The first area where cultural differences are noticeable is in an academic atmosphere. Many international students' educational institutions encourage and appreciate discussion and critical thinking. In Chinese classrooms, lectures and examinations could be used more often. Teachers and others in authority are highly respected. Some children find this format beneficial. Speaking out makes some individuals uneasy. It takes time and patience to adapt. Cultural differences affect both beliefs and

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behaviour (Sheng et al., 2022). The Chinese value group held great regard. It could be necessary for students from more autonomous cultural backgrounds to adapt. For divided duties and collaborative tasks, adaptation is required. This approach improves cultural sensitivity and flexibility. Chinese universities play a critical role in reducing cultural differences. New student programs specify acceptable conduct both inside and outside of the classroom. Offices across the world provide guidance and assistance. Friendships between domestic and foreign students are fostered via involvement in campus activities that are open to all students. In an encouraging environment, communication is simpler and stress is reduced (Yılmaz & Temizkan, 2022).

As mentioned in the mentioned discussion, the hypothesis was constructed established on the consideration of examining the important correlation between Cultural Differences and International Students in Chinese Universities:

"H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Cultural Differences and International Students in Chinese Universities."

"H_1: There is a significant relationship between Cultural Differences and International Students in Chinese Universities."

Table 2: H_1 ANOVA Test

ANOVA					
Sum					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	82371.852	192	8215.721	997.658	0.000
Within Groups	594.971	257	8.235		
Total	82966.823	449			

The current research investigation determined important results. At the alpha level of 0.05, statistical significance has been acquired by the stated F-value of around 997.658, while the p-value was around 0.000. This determined that the null hypothesis has been rejected while, the alternative hypothesis, "H_1: There is a significant relationship between Cultural Differences and International Students in Chinese Universities" has been accepted.

DISCUSSION

In this study, international students' cross-cultural learning at Chinese universities was insightfully examined. It was found that students' educational experiences were affected by cultural differences. The research investigated how cultural diversity affects Chinese students' academic and social lives. Foreign students' struggles and potential were shown. Cultural variations considerably impacted student adaptation. Students from different communities struggled. Many language barriers existed as several students had trouble speaking Chinese. It hampered class and social involvement. Cultural assumptions caused miscommunication where differences may generate confusion and frustration. Chinese classroom participation and social etiquette challenged students. The study indicated that students learn from difficulties. Cultural exchanges expand students' perspectives and their views towards the world. Numerous students prefer classroom instruction which leads to more transparency and flexibility. Talents assist personal and professional growth which helps in their career. According to research, support systems matter. Language, culture, and orientation programs help students adjust to college. Students may deal with cultural differences with assistance. Foreign and local student peer support is crucial as they help in building community and reducing isolation.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion summarised the results of the investigation. The researcher found that cultural differences influenced the educational experiences of international students at Chinese universities. Differences presented problems and growth opportunities. Cultural awareness and management improved student experiences. Cultural differences are challenging for students. Different learning styles, language difficulties and social rituals may generate irritation and misunderstanding. These difficulties can affect students' grades and social lives. Despite obstacles, many students achieved success as adapting made them stronger and tolerant. They learnt problem-solving and intercultural communication from these educational experiences. Globalisation has elevated such talents. Support helped students overcome cultural barriers. Language, culture, and university support groups helped students to adjust. Students needed resources and help to become confident and motivated. Local student peer support also improved the environment. Cultural awareness and friendships-built respect. A feeling of community lessened loneliness. Research showed that teachers knowing students' cultures benefited education. Based on learning styles and culture, instructors may change their methods. Classrooms became more inclusive and students performed better. Education became engaging and meaningful. Hence, recognising cultural diversity in teaching helps institutions accept international students.

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