

Exploring How Three (3) Common Psychological Factors Can Affect Students' Performances While Studying Overseas

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of three common psychological factors, which are homesickness, cultural differences, and acceptance or fitting in, on the performance of students studying overseas. The study aims to provide detailed knowledge of how these factors can impact academic achievements, adjustments, and the overall well-being of students studying in foreign countries. With a qualitative research approach, the study includes a literature review, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of secondary data from different sources. The findings show that a significant challenge faced by students while studying abroad is homesickness, which leads to emotional distress, concentration problems, reduced motivation, and social interaction disadvantages. Cultural differences can also impose challenges for students as they locate unfamiliar norms, practices, and beliefs that impact their cognitive abilities, emotional well-being, and social skills. Moreover, acceptance or fitting in plays a significant role in the satisfaction and academic success of students with positive acceptance. self-confidence, social competence, and a sense of belonging is promoted. On the other hand, negative experiences can result in lowered self-worth, social isolation, and academic impairments. The study recognizes limitations like reliance on secondary data and emphasizes a limited number of psychological factors. Future recommendations include primary data collection, investigation of interactions between psychological factors, and longitudinal designs. This study reveals the significance of resolving psychological factors for supporting the academic performance and overall well-being of students studying overseas.

Keywords: *Cultural Differences, Fitting -in, Homesickness.*

Introduction

Education and learning are major milestones in any individual's life. Both are said to be continuous and can be referred to as that aspect of life that spans from the "womb to the tomb." This study aims to explore how three (3) common psychological factors, namely, (a) homesickness; (b) cultural differences; and (c) acceptance or fitting in that affect students' performances while studying overseas.

By interrogating the literature, the study will seek to place emphasis on each of these factors

and how they can affect students' performances while studying overseas.

Education today is not just in the classroom in your local town or district; a student can opt to study overseas, where the opportunities seem endless. It will expose the student to diverse cultures, foods, religious beliefs, and even different languages.

Whether it is just for a semester or a full degree program in another country, studying abroad can be one of the most rewarding and exhilarating experiences of a person's life. There, they will be exposed to several diverse

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cultures, face new challenges, and have other experiences that will help to open their minds to a whole new world.

A simple definition that can be used to describe studying abroad is “a program that is offered by a university that allows a student to live in a foreign country and attend that university.” Or two universities have an arrangement that allows them to exchange students so that these students can learn about a foreign culture and help to broaden their horizons. Considering all the benefits and glamour of studying abroad, there are some psychological factors as well as environmental conditions that one may not be used to that may work against them, such as the different climate conditions, food and beverages, and languages. Considering its wide scope, this paper will focus on only these three (3) common psychological factors: (a) homesickness, (b) cultural differences, and (c) acceptance or fitting in.

An Overview of the Three Common Psychological Factors

The three (3) common psychological factors that the researcher is exploring are (a) homesickness, (b) cultural differences, and (c) acceptance or fitting in, and how they can affect the performance of students while studying overseas.

Homesickness

No matter how much you argue and fight with your families while living together, the moment you have been gone for a few days, you started to miss them, their constant bickering and noise, and their troublesome ways, especially if you have a younger sibling who is constantly giving you trouble [1]. There and then, homesickness starts to sink in. In other words, “homesickness” may be defined as the distress caused by being away from home. It is a mixture of anxiety and depression; homesickness is not a sign of weakness but

rather a consequence of the stability and attachment of the home.

Cultural Differences

Living in a foreign country all by yourself can be quite daunting and can have an impact on your daily routine. Cultural differences may be defined as the different beliefs, behaviors, languages, practices, and expressions considered unique to members of a specific ethnicity, race, or national origin.

Cultural diversity is especially important in today’s global arena [2]. We can learn from one another, but first, we must have a level of appreciation and understanding for each other to facilitate this kind of collaboration and cooperation.

Acceptance (fitting in)

Finding the right clique, gang, or making friends abroad as an international student can be much more difficult than in your own country due to certain external factors such as language barriers or race. Acceptance, or fitting in, simply means to be accepted into a group of people as a member of that group. As an international student far away from home, you will want to feel like you belong or are accepted. Fitting in or being accepted will make making friends easier; don't get judged for being different from an international student.

Literature Review

Psychology is among many things that affect humans' day-to-day activities. The success or failure we face in the various activities we perform each day most often depends on our everyday psychology. As such, people can suffer from various psychological problems that severely disrupt their daily functioning on various occasions [3]. These problems emanate from psychological factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, lack of motivation, loneliness, culture shock, helplessness, and phobias. These psychological problems can lead students in higher education institutions to fail in their academic achievements due to test anxiety, deficient performance, low self-

confidence, unrealistic worry, and fear or uneasiness that interfere with their ability to function normally.

Homesickness

Based on the exploration of the three psychological factors, homesickness can be regarded as a feeling of longing for one's home during a period of absence from it. [4] confirmed this definition by stating that homesickness may be defined as the distress caused by separation from home. [5] pointed out some of the common traits of homesickness, such as loneliness and missing friends and family, which can have a negative impact on students' performances. [6] Based on research, all believe that feelings of homesickness can lead to difficulties in focusing, depression, anxiety, withdrawal, physical health problems, and socio-cultural adjustment issues.

In addition, they stated that it is heavily influenced by factors such as discrimination and social disconnect, and if these factors are left unchecked, they could lead to unfortunate consequences for students adjusting to academic life. According to [7], they are of the opinion that homesickness can also influence academic performance, which is detrimental to completing college.

Cultural Differences

Culture is not just about languages, food, appearances, and private habits. It can portray deep perceptions, beliefs, and values that influence one's way of life and, therefore, the way one views his or her surroundings. According to the international student website, one of the most common challenges for students studying abroad can be cultural differences (culture shock). [8] stated that a simple definition may be the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone when they are suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes. This may cause students to have symptoms such as

sadness, loneliness, melancholy, preoccupation with health, changes in sleep habits, changes in mood, loss of identity, lack of confidence, and longing for family, according to the website. Additional factors that contribute to cultural differences or shock, according to the website, are climate, language, social roles, rules of behavior, values, and relationship stress.

Acceptance (Fitting In)

An article in Psychology Today by Joanna Cannon, dated July 13, 2016, reiterates that we all want to feel accepted and fit in. The need for acceptance may be a basic human instinct, although some value it quite differently from others. We all want to fit in and feel like we belong. To achieve that, we often present slightly different versions of who we are, depending on the environment and the company we are in [9]. We might have numerous "editions" of ourselves—for work, reception, or online. We often tweak and modify ourselves to be accepted in a particular situation, setting, or group. However, one may question whether we are being accepted for who we truly are or merely for the version we elect to present ourselves.

According to [10], this duplicity works very well for most of us, but some people only have one version of themselves. They are unable, or unwilling, to sandpaper themselves down to fit society's expectations, and because their behavior or appearance does not quite match the herd, they are pushed further and further to the periphery of a community.

These are the goats all around us, stitched into the landscape of everyone's day, waiting at bus stops and standing in line at the supermarket. We use quite different tactics, even unconventional methods at times, to separate the goats from the sheep. Their hair could be a touch too long, and their clothes could be a touch unconventional. They may choose to live their lives in a way we don't recognize in ourselves.

Methods

For the exploration of the impact of the three common psychological factors—homesickness, cultural differences, and fitting in or acceptance on the performance of students while studying in other nations, a qualitative research approach will be used.

Literature Review

This section conducts a detailed review of past research studies, reports, academic papers, and relevant literature on the topic. In the literature review, electronic databases will be searched for reputable sources and academic journals to identify relevant studies that have explored psychological factors and their implications for students studying overseas [11]. Main databases include Google Scholar, PubMed, and Eric.

Data Collection and Compilation

gathering relevant data and information from the sources identified. This may involve data on the incidence and prevalence of homesickness, acceptance, and cultural differences among students studying overseas, as well as data on academic performance [12]. Collecting relevant statistics, quality findings, case studies, and the rest of the information gives information on psychological factors and their impact.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the gathered data and information for identification of patterns, themes, and trends related to psychological factors and their influence on the performance of students. This analysis can include categorizing the data based on geographical location, duration of study, cultural context, and academic discipline. Identifying common themes and key findings from the secondary data.

Synthesis and Interpretation

Synthesizing the findings from the data analysis and interpreting the results about the

research question and objectives identification of the strengths and drawbacks of the existing studies and taking into concentration any conflicting findings or gaps in the literature [13]. Providing a detailed overview of the influence of homesickness, cultural differences, and acceptance on the performance of students based on secondary data.

Limitations and Recommendations

Some of the limitations involve the lack of primary data and the diversity of sources and methods used in the present study. There is also the possibility of errors or biases in the data collection and analysis. The last limitation is related to the generalizability of the findings to different populations or contexts. Some of the recommendations involve doing primary research with students studying overseas using longitudinal designs or mixed methods. It is recommended to explore the rest of the psychological factors that may impact performance and compare the findings of different strategies for mitigating the psychological challenges.

Results

Based on secondary data and interrogating the literature, the following results were noted:

Homesickness

Based on secondary data, the effect of homesickness is and can be very harmful since the major goal of all students studying overseas in a foreign country is to graduate with distinction and honors. Homesickness can lead to deficient performance, and in some cases, the student can even fail to graduate. This problem must therefore be addressed for students to benefit from studying overseas.

Cultural Differences

The literature stated that students studying overseas often suffer from cultural differences because they feel a sudden lack of home support and a familiar environment.

The students may see the new environment as irrational, unpleasant, or even hostile. In addition to those, the students may lack language or people skills to get accustomed to a new culture.

Acceptance (Fitting In)

This is an adjustment most students don't anticipate or cope with well. Many students have a challenging time making friends or finding the right group to fit in with or study with. This may be a result of a language barrier or other customs to which they are not accustomed. As a result of not fitting in or being accepted, this often leads to loneliness, depression, or other serious disturbances such as drugs.

Discussion

The aim of the study is to explore three common psychological factors that can impact the performance of students while studying abroad. The study utilized a qualitative research approach and did a literature review, data collection and compilation, data analysis, and interpretation of the secondary data from various sources [14]. The study found that psychological factors have a major impact on the academic accomplishments, adjustments, and well-being of students studying overseas.

Homesickness turned out to be one of the most challenging and common psychological factors impacting students when they leave their home nation and study in a new environment. This factor can lead to emotional distress such as loneliness, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and nostalgia that can interfere with the motivation, concentration, and learning outcomes of students. The physical health of students can also be affected by homesickness symptoms such as appetite changes, sleep problems, fatigue, and headaches [15]. Further social interactions of the students can also be impacted by homesickness, such as reduced willingness to participate in class activities, make friends with locals or the rest of the

students, and join clubs or societies. Therefore, homesickness can adversely impact the academic performance and overall satisfaction of students studying abroad.

Cultural differences are another psychological factor encountered by students while they study abroad. Cultural differences can be referred to as the different norms, values, beliefs, languages, customs, and behaviors that make up the characteristics of a country or region. Cultural differences can pose different challenges for students who have adapted to an unfamiliar and new culture while protecting their own cultural identity. Cultural differences can lead to cultural shock, which is a process of feeling frustrated, confused, disoriented, or overwhelmed by the new culture [16]. Culture shock can impact the cognitive abilities of students by impairing their problem-solving skills, memory, and creativity. Culture shock can also impact the emotional status of students, such as irritability, mood swings, anger, or sadness. Moreover, culture can impact social skills, resulting in them feeling insecure, misunderstood by others, or isolated. Therefore, cultural differences can have an adverse impact on the academic performance of students while they study abroad.

The third psychological factor was acceptance, or fitting in. This is encountered by students when they study overseas. Acceptance of fitting in can have a negative or positive impact on the students' reliance on the way they perceive and react to their social environment. On the one hand, acceptance of fitting in can be beneficial for students, who feel welcome and supported by their classmates and peers. Acceptance can enhance self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. It can also promote social competence by enhancing communication skills, teamwork abilities, and intercultural awareness.

Therefore, acceptance can have a positive impact on the academic performance and happiness of students. It can also have harmful effects on students who feel discriminated

against, rejected, or isolated by others. It can result in lowering students' self-worth, identity, and self-respect. It can impair social development by reducing social support, social networks, and social capital among students. Moreover, acceptance of fitting in can limit the academic achievements of students by causing them to experience academic anxiety, stress, or depression. Therefore, it can have a negative impact on the academic performance and overall well-being of the student studying in a foreign country.

There are several limitations to the study that need to be acknowledged. To begin with, the study is dependent on secondary data analysis that may not reflect the present perspectives or situations of students studying overseas [17]. Secondly, it used a qualitative research approach and did not provide quantifiable or generalizable findings that could be compared in various contexts or populations. Thirdly, the study emphasized only three psychological factors that may not cover the full range of factors influencing the performance of students studying overseas. Fourthly, the study did not take into consideration the possible interactions or moderating effects of such psychological factors on one another that may impact the performance of the students.

There are also several implications and recommendations for future research. To begin with, the study recommends that psychological factors are crucial determinants of the performance of students studying overseas. So future research should continue to discover these factors and their implications using various methods, samples, and data sources. Furthermore, the study shows that the psychological factors are not static but are changeable over time and dynamic [18]. Therefore, research should include cross-sectional designs for capturing the evolutions or variations in such factors and their effects on the course of study programs abroad. Moreover, the study implies that physical factors are not isolated but are interrelated and impacted by

other factors like institutional, personal, and environmental factors. So future research should investigate the complex interactions and relationships among these variables and their effects using multilevel or multivariate analysis. Lastly, the study reveals that psychological factors have positive as well as negative effects on students' performance. Therefore, research in the future should determine and analyze the probable strategies or interventions that can improve the positive effects and counter the negative effects of such factors on students' performance.

Conflicts of Interest

It is significant to have knowledge of potential conflicts of interest that may arise related to this research. Conflicts of interest can arise when there is a misalignment between the personal or financial interests of researchers and the objective and non-prejudiced conduct of the study. In this research, the effect of psychological factors on students studying overseas is probable, and conflicts of interest can involve:

Personal Bias

The involved researchers in this study may have personal experiences that could impact their data interpretation and selection of sources. For instance, if a researcher had an adverse experience studying abroad, they may tend to focus on the negative impact of psychological factors on the performance of students. To overcome this probable conflict of interest, researchers should try to maintain objectivity and reduce personal biases. We should approach the research with an open mind and critically evaluate the evidence to ensure our personal experiences or opinions do not influence the findings unduly.

Funding Bias

If the research is funded by an organization or entity with an interest in a specific outcome, there is a probable conflict of interest. For

example, if a study exploring the influence of homesickness on the performance of students studying abroad is funded by a company that deals in offering counseling services to homesick students, they may be more inclined to focus on the homesickness' negative impacts. To mitigate funding bias, researchers should disclose any financial affiliations or relationships that could impact the findings of the study [19]. Ensuring transparency in funding sources helps maintain the integrity and credibility of the research.

Publication Bias

This can occur when researchers or academic journals selectively publish studies with significant or positive findings while overlooking studies with non-significant or negative results. This can cause an over-presentation of certain perspectives and skew the overall understanding of the topic. To mitigate publication bias, researchers can intend to publish their findings with their respective results. In addition to this, academic journals should be committed to publishing a diverse range of studies to provide a balanced view of the research topic.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the three (3) common psychological factors (a) homesickness, (b) cultural differences, and (c) acceptance or fitting, the following recommendations were noted:

Homesickness

According to [20], a key component of addressing homesickness or loneliness is to try to be social and get involved. Socializing with local students prevents homesickness, as the more international students mingle with local students, the less homesickness they experience [6]. Other ways of limiting or eliminating homesickness are listed below:

1. Thanks to technology, you can now stay in touch with your loved ones through Skype,

WhatsApp, FaceTime, etc. These allow you to see your loved ones at any time of the day (or night).

2. Make use of international calling cards where you need to pay a monthly charge for free unlimited calling to a large number of countries.
3. Visit a local restaurant that serves dishes from your home country.
4. Stay away from social media and stop surfing through year-old pictures.
5. Involve yourself in interesting activities to keep your mind productive.

Cultural Differences

It is a good opportunity to allow one not only to restrict a single set of ideologies but also to figure out different styles of ideologies and concepts. However, some students find it difficult to adjust to a different culture, and as such, it can hinder their progression.

The best way to deal with cultural issues is to keep an open mind when meeting new people. If it is the language aspect of the culture (language barriers) that is holding you back, enroll in a language class if your schedule permits, or try out special apps like Duolingo that will help you understand different languages. Another way to deal with cultural differences is to cast your fear aside and interact with the locals or attend local events and cultural festivals.

Acceptance (Fitting In)

Feeling left out can cause someone to become depressed, sad, or even lonely. Studying abroad away from your close family, friends, and loved ones and entering a strange country without feeling welcome or accepted can be challenging. Listed below are some ways you can help overcome the feeling of being unaccepted or not fitting in.

1. Give yourself some time to get over the feeling of "unwantedness." Instead, be yourself and don't lose your basic nature or your sense of humor. Politeness, kindness,

and the ability to make people laugh are traits that work like charm, no matter which part of the world you might be in.

2. Participating in group activities and joining student societies are good icebreakers. You might even find groups of your community in a faraway country where you will have the prospect of satisfying yourself, hanging around with fellow countrymen, and sharing your fears and concerns with people who can identify with you.
3. Another great way to make friends is to initially engage in small talk by asking for help.

Studying overseas will expose the student to a new ambience and an environment that can create a challenge for them. Even if a student knows a lot about the country where he is going to live, there is a probability that he will be treated differently. Eating habits, though they sound extremely trivial, are often the root cause

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of discomfort. One can feel homesick, lost, or alienated.

Furthermore, studying in a different language is often a frightening obstacle that a lot of students won't be ready to overcome. Also, making good friends does take time, and it is often harder in a country where you simply aren't very willing to. However, it is often an outstanding opportunity for international exposure, learning a unique language and culture, traveling aficionados, employment opportunities, scrupulous knowledge of areas of interest, and research activities.

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