

## THE SOCIO-CULTURE ADAPTATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT SELECTED SCHOOLS OF BATANGAS PROVINCE, PHILIPPINES

Jerson L. Mariño, Phd<sup>1</sup>  
Meynard D. Montalbo, Phd<sup>2</sup>  
Mahjalín Araíza S. Bugtong, Rpm<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Program Head, Psychology Department, University of Batangas - Lipa Campus, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>Director of Student Affairs, University of Batangas - Lipa Campus, Philippines

<sup>3</sup>Psychometrician, Psychology Department, University of Batangas - Lipa Campus, Philippines

**Accepted date:** 29 July 2017    **Published date:** 2 October 2017

### **To cite this document:**

Marino, J. L., Montalbo, M. D., & Bugtong, M. A. (2017). The Socio-Culture Adaptation among International Students at Selected Schools of Batangas Province, Philippines. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling*, 2(5), 83-98.

---

**Abstract:** *The research described the factors that affect the socio-culture adaptations of international students who are currently studying in Batangas Province, Philippines. In lieu with this, the study described the profile of the respondents and difficulties they met in adaptations. It elaborated the adaptive behaviours acquired in overcoming the difficulties. It also analyzed the significant difference of adaptive behaviours based on age, gender, a length of stay, and religious affiliation. The research also formulated a list proposal to promote educational and cultural exchange adaptation development to increase mutual understanding between the students. The study employed a mixed method research design which implied two methods in collecting and analyzing data. The international students recognize that the best coping mechanism for a student who has just migrated in Batangas is to learn step by step the language of the locals, gain friends and consider visiting the beautiful places nearby. International students were positive in sharing that living in Batangas province in Philippines has improved them as persons specifically by helping them become more mature and responsible. Although the research has reached its aims, there was an unavoidable limitation. The research was conducted in college levels and the population size is only small. Therefore, to generalize the results for larger groups, the study should have involved more participants at different school levels.*

**Keywords:** *Socio-culture, Adaptation, International Students, Batangas, Philippines*

---

## **Introduction**

Hosting international students bring about significant advantage for all parties concerned to enrich the higher education, strengthen relations with various countries in world trade and promote global understanding. Given the increasing focus on internationalization strategies by many universities and colleges, the literature on international student socio-cultural adaptations has expanded significantly in the past. The researchers and theorists agree that this population experiences an array of difficulties in their sojourn such understanding the language, integration to the hosts culture, adjustment to food, weather and failure to adapt or adjust may lead to a lot of stress, loneliness and depression. Many studies have been conducted globally about international students and it all showed equivalent results that socio-cultural adaptation is one of the primary concerns of them. Ability to adapt results to success and failure means going home without fulfilling their dream or goal, that is, finishing their studies and having a degree.

The researchers of the study aimed to do the following: First, they hoped to describe the profile of the respondents and difficulties they met in adaptations. Second, they intended to elaborate the adaptive behaviours acquired by the international students in overcoming the difficulties. Third, they aimed to analyze the significant difference of adaptive behaviours based on age, gender, length of stay, and religious affiliation. And last, the researchers formulated a suggested list of activities and services that will assist the international students while studying and living in Batangas Province, Philippines.

## **Literature Review**

### ***International students***

International students must contribute to the diversity and internationalization of their classrooms, campuses, and communities as stated by Wu, H. P., Garza, E., & Guzman, N. (2015). For example, these students add different perspectives in the classroom and enhance the mutual understanding and appreciation of the differences found around the world. Therefore, it is critical to embrace international students on campuses because of their contributions that have positively influenced the student population on so many distinct levels. They also enhance the academic excellence of the colleges and universities they enter to because they are well-prepared academically. These students should bring new divergent ways of thinking and catalyze academic competition. Though these international students are performing well in their school, nevertheless, academic requirements as well as that of language must meet.

Learning and understanding of sojourns about new views and perspectives towards life can be achieved while studying in another country as mentioned by Poyrazli & Grahame (2007) as cited by Chen, S.H. (2009). What characterizes international students from other sojourners are the academic goal and school environment. Results of most researches showed that many international students desired frequent social support from host national students in emotional, practical, informational and in the form of social companionship (Chuah & Singh, 2016). Suggestions are made to institutions of higher learning to create a more supportive and conducive environment for intercultural contact in line with the efforts of internationalization.

## **Socio-culture adaptation**

Successful intercultural transition and must focus on academic mission are the most important challenges for international students (Cushner & Karim, 2004). They should handle the challenges effectively and adjust according to the host culture to avoid less satisfaction with their performance and even quit. Therefore, adjustments to cultures of host countries are equally important for international students. A prolonged cultural-adjustment period can cause international students to drop out of institution before completing a program or take considerably longer to complete programs than domestic students (Garcia, M.S., 2015).

Students studying abroad go through an extreme adjustment stress because not only do they make the educational environment transitions, but they are also trying to adjust to life in a new country. The stresses caused by the cultural adjustments have been considered to have significant effects on international students. Several psychological crises such as low self-esteem, disappointment, resentment, anger, sadness, physical illness and other symptoms of cultural shock are the shared experiences of the international students (Sullivan, C., & Kashubeck-West, S. 2015).

Cultural adjustment and acculturation process is linked to coping as averred by Ozturgut, O., & Murphy, C. (2009). The international students can be expected to develop a variety of coping strategies that allow them to function adequately. Gay, G. (2002) proposes the notion that understanding students' needs and how they cope in their new environment provide educators insights to be effectual in their teaching. It is viewed that diversity of the classroom provides them the opportunity to reflect on the learning environment, their teaching strategies and most importantly, develop professional skills in their job (Inoue, Y. Ed. 2006). The phenomenon of this subject is real among international students in higher education institutions in the Philippines ( Mbaleka & Joseph (2013).

As one of the results mentioned, lack of cultural understanding in both Filipino and international students seem to play a significant role in isolation of the international students. The socio-cultural adaptations are taking a toll on the international students' academic performance and their emotional and physical life. As part of their recommendation, prejudiced practices, and use of language, other than the official medium of instruction, should be discouraged in higher education institutions if there are international students in the classroom. Mentioned above create more opportunities for coping and healthy socialization for all.

Research framework is supported by three psychological theories namely: Baumeister and Leary's belongingness theory, Albert Bandura's social learning theory and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It is in our nature as human beings to form relationships and the lack of attachments is linked to a variety of ill effects on health, adjustment and well-being (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). International students need a person / group or affiliation for survival and adapt culture successfully. Observation must be practiced by them and see how behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (Bandura, A. 1977). More so, Esteem needs are great motivators for learning adjustment even in a difficult situation as per Maslow mentioned by Niemela, P., & Kim, S. (2014).

### ***Batangas Province, Philippines***

With the advent of ASEAN integration in the Philippines, educational institutions are encouraged to accept international students not only to foster global and cultural understanding but also to boost academic and economic exchange. Based on the data provided by the Bureau of Immigration Statistics (Philippines), the number of international students in the country increased from 26,000 in 2011 to more than 61,000 in 2012. This increase signifies the growing presence of international students in the country. However, it is undeniable that these international students face difficulties in making adjustments due to lack of social support, communication problems, and homesickness. From the socio-cultural perspective, Ward and Kennedy (2001) revealed that students would have to learn new skills and sometimes change practiced skills in fitting into a new culture based on past experiences.

In support of these new learning, some universities and colleges in Batangas Province accept international students as they continuously provide them the best education which will help them possess the core values of global competitiveness and an industry-based set of courses that trains them with the knowledge and skills they will need for future employment. It is undeniably true that there are various international students who choose Batangas Province for its well-known world-class destination with ecologically balanced and sustainable developing infrastructures and advanced quality of education among universities and colleges. Their locations are very strategic because of a refreshing atmosphere with a touch of nature-friendly environment themes. Aside from being “regionalist,” the Batangueños have great customs, and the practices exist until today.

Academic failure or sociological problems are the results of the psychological effects on the individual not succeed to adjust to a new culture. Prolonged cultural-adjustment period can cause international students to drop out of institution before completing a program or take considerably longer to complete programs. Researchers claimed that because of academic transitions and all the various adjustments, students studying abroad experience significant stress and pressure. As such, the researchers investigated the socio-cultural adaptations of international students’ in Batangas Province. It is supported with the intention to describe the factors related to this phenomenon and how it can be used as a powerful tool in assisting the creation of developmental and enhancement programs.

For instance, the University of Batangas’ (UB) program for international students includes offering Basic Filipino Class to help these students develop understanding of the basic Filipino language needed for the everyday transaction, English Enhancement Program which is a short-term program that helps develop their English proficiency before allowing to take undergraduate program and Cultural Familiarization to provide international students hand information about the Philippines. The program also offers the student opportunity to interact with the native Batangueños and participate with some community activities.

### **Methodology**

The study employed a mixed method research design which implied two methods in collecting and analyzing data. Creswell (2003) mentioned that this process could confirm, cross-validate or collaborate and integrate findings. He added that this design usually assimilates the results of the two methods, especially in interpretation phase. Mixed method positioned research in a transformative framework whereby a baseline was established using a

quantitative scale and normative data to help interpret qualitative interviews, resulting in what they call a mixed methods interview. Philosophical and practical implications are discussed (Frels, R. K., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. 2013).

For qualitative phase, the researchers chose this means to obtain a thorough understanding of international students' adaptation process. In more detail, semi- structure interview was applied to acquire resources of data. The primary data resources were mainly interviews. The process of data analysis is presented in the following phases. In the first step, all interview contents that were recorded were transformed as transcripts. In the second phase, similar concepts were put into one category.

For quantitative phase, a purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants in the study. The instrument used includes a demographic questionnaire which covers the participant's age, gender, nationalities, and length of residency in the Philippines. The researchers modified the revised socio-cultural adaptation scale used by Wilson, J. (2013). The obtained overall reliability of the adapted 21-item scale was found to be acceptable ( $\alpha=.70$ );

The study employed both descriptive and inferential statistics in examining the differences between the responses of international students when grouped according to profile. ANOVA was used as the main statistical tool. Also, the researchers used thematic analysis in identifying themes and subthemes that pertained to the research questions in the interview. Themes in the qualitative analysis were used also to support the results obtained in the quantitative interpretation.

The researchers' conducted the study in selected colleges and universities within Batangas Province. Research participants of the study comprised 42 international students enrolled in a 4-5 year degree course, within the school year 2016-2017 and had spent quite a time in the Philippines particularly Batangas province. The ethnicity of the respondents range widely (Papua New Guinea – 9 or 45%; Nigerian – 7 or 16%; USA – 5 or 11%; Angola and Korea 4 or 9.5%; Saudi – 3 or 7%; Eritrea and Somalia – 2 or 4.7% and the rest with 1 or 2.4%). All of them were interviewed in English, which created a comfortable atmosphere for them to express their opinions. In the beginning, the researchers contacted international students through international linkages offices of the schools where they are enrolled. The questionnaires and the interview time were about 20 minutes on average.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Profile of the Participants highest scores per Category**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Age	24 - 26 y.o	36.00%
Gender	Male	62.00%
Length of Stay	3 - 4 years	36.00%
Religious Affiliation	Christianity	46.00%

According to the gathered data, Table 1 illustrates the highest distribution of the percentages per categories.

15 participants stated that their age group is in 24 – 26 years of age which is equivalent to 36%. These findings prove that implementation of guidelines set by the department of foreign affairs in giving a temporary visa to foreign nationals who wish to study in the Philippines is appropriately followed. Universities also properly set the cross checking of documents to ensure if the intention to study and the requirements are met.

26 participants stated that they are in the male group which is equivalent to 62%. According to respondent #4, he wants to pursue a decent course to build good future for him and in preparation for having a family. The same with Philippine culture, Filipino parents sent their sons to school with a belief that males have to learn and be successful and eventually earn more as they shoulder the responsibilities such as finances of the family.

14 participants are in 3 – 4 years length of stay in Batangas Province and came up with the decision of transferring to the host country because of the relatives who are staying in the country.

Then, 14 participants mentioned that their religious affiliation is Christianity which is equivalent to 46%. According to respondent #16, she and her friends attend Christian religious activities in Batangas city, and she found it comfortable exercising religious beliefs even if she is in another country.

The profile of the respondents supports the esteem needs in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. As per his theory, this age of individuals is eager to attain achievements in life especially in the line of career and independence. They believed that attainment of this can lead to status, self-respect and even respect for others.

**Table 2: Frequent challenges/problems encountered by the International Students while studying/living in Batangas Province, Philippines**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
IC1	Racism, Back Stabbing and Gossiping	10
AWP1	Many school fees need to pay	16
AWP2	Education system is a challenge, and too many school work	7
AWP3	Being alone in school, feeling left out most of the time	18
PICI1	Financial Problem	11
PICI2	People are not so accomodating and classmates having hard time to interact	6
PICI3	Preferred Food	5
PICI4	Homesickness and Loneliness	18
EA1	Culture Shock	20
EA2	Traffic	12
EA3	Littering and Proper Waste Disposal	15
EA4	Pollution, Weather, Heat and Mosquitos	10
LP1	Having a hard time to elaborate and understand the local language	31
LP2	Teacher and student do not speak English language all the time	24

Table 2 illustrates the common answers of the research participants from the interview with regards to the challenges and problems encountered by them. Answers mentioned only once

are not stated in the table. This result shows that the highest sources of difficulty are in the Interpersonal Communication (IC), Academic / Work Performance (AWP), Personal Interests and Community Involvement (PICI), Ecological Adaptation (EA), and Language Proficiency (LP) which are all under the socio-culture adaptation of the research participants. It indicated that the top two sources of difficulty came from language proficiency and ecological adaptation. These findings are congruent with previous studies. Research investigating the adaptation of international students has found that students report language difficulty as one of their biggest concerns and several studies have reported that international students who have higher language proficiency report better adjustment (Ng, 2006; Poyrazli, Arbona, Bullington&Pisecco, 2001).

Andrade (2006) stated that, 'academic adjustment problems for international students tend to focus on language issues'. In a similar study conducted among African students of Kuban State University, Kamara (2012) found out that 59.9 % of foreign students are experiencing significant levels of stress and that this tension arises from the need to study a non-native language and communicate with the Russian people as the representatives of other cultures. Zhai (2004) reported that meeting academic demands was the most overwhelming difficulty for international students during their adjustment stage. He went on to say that while language proficiency was the most frequently investigated concern, students in his group felt it was not as stressful as the stress of academics. Kosheleva, E. Y., Amarnor, A. J., & Chernobilsky, E. (2015) suggests a different idea, indicating that factors such as distance from the family (16%), cultural differences (8.5%) and lack of friends (7.0%) are the least cause of stress for the international students.

With regards to the results of the questionnaires given to them, Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of the survey with means reported for each item. On average, respondents were able to adapt to the culture of the host country/locality to a great extent (weighted mean of 3.15). The respondents reported about being able to manage academic work or responsibilities to a great extent (mean= 3.44) as well as being able to adapt to the pace of life (mean = 3.49). Rated to a great extent too are items about interpreting and responding to other people's gestures and facial expressions (mean = 3.95) and obeying the locality's rules and regulations (3.51). On the other hand, being able to read and write in the local language and being able to understand and speak the local language were both rated to a less extent with mean values of 2.1 and 2.51. Also, most of the respondents reported adapting to the food/ weather/ living conditions of the host country as well as adjusting behaviour to suit social norms, attitudes beliefs and customs at a less extent (mean values = 2.98; 2.88).

The study of Ward and Kennedy (2001) revealing that students would have to learn new skills and sometimes alter practiced skills in fitting into a new culture based on past experiences supports the findings of the current study. Also included are booming and sometimes confusing cultural clashes, as well as the excitement and challenge of being in a foreign world (Matsumoto, D., LeRoux, J.A. Bernhard, R. & Gray, H. (2004); not to mention language barriers, immigration difficulties, culture shock and homesickness (Sumer, 2009).

**Table 3: Adaptive Behaviours' of International Students at selected schools of Batangas Province, Philippines**

S/N	Statement	Mean	Interpretation
1	I can build and maintain relationships	3.33	able to do a great extent
2	I can manage my academic work or responsibilities	3.44	able to do a great extent
3	I can interact at social gatherings	3.15	able to do a great extent
4	I can maintain my hobbies and interests	3.17	able to do a great extent
5	I can adapt to the food / weather / living conditions of the host country	2.98	able to do a less extent
6	I can interpret and respond to the other people's gestures and facial expressions	3.95	able to do a great extent
7	I can work effectively with other students or work colleagues	3.1	able to do a great extent
8	I can obtain community service that I need	3.12	able to do a great extent
9	I can adapt to the immediate surroundings of the place where I stay	3.29	able to do a great extent
10	I can understand and speak the local language	2.51	able to do a less extent
11	I can adjust feedback from others to help improve my performance in or out of	3.1	able to do a great extent
12	I can adjust the way manner I speak for people to understand me	3.28	able to do a great extent
13	I can interpret and respond t other people's emotions	3.24	able to do a great extent
14	I can attend or participate in community activities	3.05	able to do a great extent
15	I can move around and visit other places	3.1	able to do a great extent
16	I can interact with opposite sex	3.12	able to do a great extent
17	I can express ideas in a culturally appropriate manner	3.24	able to do a great extent
18	I can obey the locality's rules and regulations	3.51	able to do a great extent
19	I can adapt to the pace of life	3.49	able to do a great extent
20	I can read and write in local language	2.1	able to do a less extent
21	I can adjust my behaviour to suit social norms, attitudes, beliefs, and customs	2.88	able to do a less extent
<b>Total</b>		<b>2.15</b>	<b>able to do a great extent</b>

The answers of the respondents on open-ended questions also support findings shown above. Most of the subjects reported having a tough time because of the hot weather in which some

mentioned that “it’s hard to adjust due to language and environment. It is hot and made me feel like I am living in the past” while there were some who reported feeling happy and excited, “it’s a new experience because the living and dialect are quite different.” A study by Sicat, R.M. (2011) agrees with these results by concluding that Koreans found the hot climate in the Philippines a pressing problem. Adjusting to the new climate is something that international students anywhere must endure. When asked to describe their experience living in the province, most of the respondents talked about having a great experience and enjoying education in the country, “I’m enjoying my stay, it’s good generally but being a student is tough, the study is here is good. Overall, evidence suggests that international students are satisfied with their academic experiences (Schutz and Richards, 2003). There were also reports about the behaviour of the people around that made their stay enjoyable, “there is excitement and enjoyment because people are friendly and hospitable, most of the persons in the province are kind and approachable, people so welcoming, some helping, understanding and caring.”

While the respondents acknowledge the good about staying in the country, they also mentioned about the challenges found during their stay here. The results of the qualitative study where the respondents admit problems with understanding and learning the local language support the findings in the descriptive statistics. Also, the respondents added that the way people behave affects them too, “the way people act is mostly immature, they gossip, classmates giving a hard time, and people are very closed minded.” They also mentioned about the experience of racism. Several studies also support these findings. A few studies have found that international students also face the additional challenge of coping with socio-cultural differences. For example, students travelling abroad may find it difficult to adjust to a new diet, adapt to a different climate or to understand the norms, values and attitudes of host nationals. Thus, international students travelling to a country where the socio-cultural rules are very different to that of their home country often feel very confused (Ward & Masgoret, 2006). More so, international students often report feeling isolated from host students and that students experience difficulties making host national friends when they travel abroad (Fritz et al., 2008; Zheng & Berry, 1991).

Nevertheless, while asking about the experience of stress with the new environment, most respondents said that in general, they don’t feel strain and pressure. However, they cited some factors that cause their stress sometimes. These factors include school work, language, weather, and traffic. They also did not fail to name their ways of coping with stress. Most respondents shared similar answers such as “associating with local people so I can learn the language, going out and make friends, learning the language, learning the culture and seeing new places.” In connection to this, when asked about the factors that make them feel better living in the Philippines, they mentioned about the hospitality of the people and having friends, teachers, and staff that are kind. Past research (e.g., Bandura, 1977) supports these findings that effective communication with professors and peers in academic settings, and comfortable interactions with local people in social situations are crucial elements in the successful adjustment of international students to the host country culture. Results of Cefai and Borg (2014) research revealed that many students chose talking with friends and positive thinking as the most commonly used coping strategies.

On average, the respondents reported having trouble as an international student because of racism and communication barrier. Most respondents talked about “being sometimes teased, felt left out most of the time in class, hard because of other classmates afraid to make contact

with you and most of the people look at me strangely.” This in part is contradictory to the conclusions derived from Cefai and Borg (2014) study stating that a clear majority of international students reported that they never experienced any form of discrimination. Only a small number of students said they experienced prejudice and/or discrimination because of their language and nationality.

Although there were negative experiences that the respondents experienced such as “having to express oneself in the same language (local), being mocked in speaking Tagalog and people take advantage because foreigner”, several international students could share a lot about their positive experiences on (psychological) adjustment living in Philippines. Most of the respondents talked about becoming more responsible, more mature and being able to make decisions for oneself. Consistent with previous study of Khawaja, N.G. & Stallman, H.M. (2011), the international students advised future students to prepare themselves for an independent life.

**Table 4: Significant difference on the Socio-culture Adaptation of International Students when grouped according to their Demographic Profile**

<b>Demographic Profile</b>	<b>F-Value</b>	<b>P - Value</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	<b>Decision</b>
Gender	0.18	0.674	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Age	1.266	0.3	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Length of Stay	1.806	0.164	Not Significant	Accept Ho
Religious Affiliation	1.399	0.256	Not Significant	Accept Ho

Since the computed probability values are less than the set p-value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the socio-cultural adaptation behaviour of the respondents when grouped according to their demographic profile.

According to Participant # 12, he mentioned that he knows all international students in the university, in fact, all of them are his friends simply because they are only a few and they need to help one another in the day to day experiences. Another statement came from Participant # 38 said that they always have meetings and open forums about their life issues while studying and living here in Batangas, Philippines.

There were no significant differences in terms of age, gender, length of stay and religious affiliation in relation to socio-culture adaptation among international students. These findings imply that majority of the experiences and adaptive behaviours of the research participants are most likely similar. Specifically, it means that whether one is older or younger, male or female, the kind of adjustment experienced is the same for all. Even if international students have diverse religions, the experiences they have concerning acculturation are almost identical. More so, the difficulty adapting to culture does not differ whether one has been staying in the area for more years or less. This however is inconsistent with the previous study (Zhao, 2010), indicating that the longer international students stayed in the host country, the less difficulty they had adapting to people’s social behaviours and perceptions.

## **Key items of the international students' socio-culture adaptation**

### ***Cultural understanding***

As stated by de Guzman, A. B., Albela, E. J. A., Nieto, D. R. D., Ferrer, J. B. F., & Santos, R. N. (2006) culture is very significant in inspiring the international students to study very well in the host country where they in. Statements from Participants # 8, 13, 15 mentioned that they feel embarrassed and want to avoid the people every time they walk in and out the university because people keep on looking at them. Statements from Participants # 23, 36, 38 mentioned that they are happy while studying in the Province of Batangas because they are learning a lot from the culture and the Filipinos are hospitable. Hofstede's cultural dimension is a theory of Psychology that supports these statements. He found out that cultures differ on four dimensions such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity-femininity, and individualism – collectivism.

### ***Social acceptance***

In Psychology Today as stated by Formica (2014), this aspect of the human condition, to love and need to be loved, is under the umbrella of social acceptance. This facet is a part of survival mechanism of every individual. Not feeling included, accepted, or understood by the domestic students and the host society can disrupt the acculturation process and can lead to emotional problems (Sakuria, McCall-Wolf, & Kashima, 2010; Zhang & Brunton, 2007). Statements from Participants # 10, 26, & 42 said that most of the time they feel alone and no one to talk to once they are inside the classrooms because there are many locals and mostly talk in the local language. What they are referring is that there are some classes where there are no other international students to accompany them, to talk with them, and to become buddies who they can ask for help especially if there are academic concerns. However, with regards to other statements of Participants # 16, 28, & 35 they initiated an effort to talk to other classmates so they can relate and cope up with daily academic concerns. Evidence suggests that friendships with resident students positively affect adjustment (Hechanova-Alampay, R., Beehr, T.A., Christiansen, N.D. & Van Horn, R.K., 2002).

### ***Emotional strength***

According to Freij, A (2009) in her article about Positive Psychology, she mentioned that it is important to find and play the strengths to build energy and wellbeing. Wisdom holds the key to emotional strength. The wisdom is to discern in which contexts to play to existing strengths and in which to go for growth. Statements from Participants # 2, 7, 11 shared that they befriend the locals to understand them better in a holistic approach. Some of them search for partners who can help them and listen to them during the ups and downs of their stay while studying in Batangas, Province. Other participants mentioned that their friends and families are also living in the province which is a crucial factor to strengthen their emotional side in solving life issues especially issues in socio-cultural adaptations. Establishing a link initially with the students from ones' own country was regarded as a good strategy. Like previous literature building friendships and social support networks appeared to buffer stress (Lee, J. S., Koeske, G. F., & Sales, E. (2004).. More so, the theory used in this study shows consistency with the results as it states that individuals have an evolved, and robust, need for closeness, and social belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

In support to these results, the researchers achieved the last objective which is the formulation of a proposal which comprises suggested program activities for international students who are currently studying in the province of Batangas, Philippines. The proposal answers the findings which can be used as interventions or enhancement of the socio-culture adaptation of the participants.

### **Suggested list of activities and services for international students**

#### ***International students orientation***

It is an activity for all newly-admitted international students to learn about on and off campus resources and support services. It familiarizes them to navigate the physical environment of the campus.

#### ***Accreditation of off campus dormitories and housing facilities***

It provides the international students to have safe and secured facilities to stay in. This assures them about the quality of campus dormitories who carry out proactive compliance activities and investigates complaints.

#### ***Basic Filipino classes***

This may help the international students to understand the Filipino language better and use them in daily productive transactions. Filipino classes such as Fil 101 and Fil 102 may increase their vocabulary and writing ability which are very substantial to their everyday living while studying.

#### ***Basic English classes***

It develops the English proficiency of international students. It makes use of intensive communicative activities and tasks that are meant to increase the participants' confidence and comprehension levels.

#### ***Cultural awareness program***

It orients international students on the culture and traditions of the Filipinos. Since Batangas is one of the provinces that contribute to the Philippines' rich history, students will get an opportunity to tour the province and experienced and understand its preserved history and culture. The program also offers the student opportunity to experience and participate in various community services along with the locals. At the end of this program, students are expected to understand and appreciate the beauty of Batangas Province and Philippines as a country.

#### ***International students day celebration***

It provides an excellent opportunity for international student groups to promote their organizations and events to the rest of the school community. It hopes to create an opportunity for students to come together to celebrate and share their rich cultural heritages with everyone on the campus.

### ***Student exchange program***

The Student Exchange Program offers opportunities for international exchanges to both local (outbound) and international (inbound) students. The office disseminates information and facilitates processing of documents with regards to the available international student exchange programs.

### ***One-on-one buddy system***

It provides that a buddy is a friend who can easily encourage the student to express his or her thoughts and concerns. They have positive outlook on life and able to use the perspective to encourage a sense of pride and loyalty in the new international student, as well as act role model to exemplify the school's values.

### ***Advising services***

It provides encouragement to students to gather and evaluate information, and make meaningful decisions based upon a consideration of the information, alternatives, and personal values and goals. The responsibilities of the school include providing information and assistance on immigration matters, providing information on campus and community services, assisting international students to achieve their academic objectives and other matters that require immediate attention.

### ***School organizations with diverse nationalities***

Representation from a variety of groups is a key place to start because it provides equality and reduces racism. Racial prejudice is reduced by developing relationships and ensuring that materials are culturally insightful, but racism is reduced when there is a permanent task force or committee that becomes part of the governance structure to ensure comprehensive solidarity and to maintain harmonious relationship between the students.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Overall, both the findings in the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study reveal language issues as the major difficulty faced by international students. Added to this are the racial discrimination they experience as well as the difficulty thriving in the hot environment of Batangas. On the other hand, the international students acknowledge that the friendliness and hospitality of the locals are of tremendous help to them in their adjustments. They recognize that the best coping mechanism for a student who has just migrated in Batangas is to learn step by step the language of the locals, gain friends and consider visiting the beautiful places nearby. International students were optimistic in sharing that living in Batangas, Philippines has improved them as persons specifically by helping them become more mature and responsible.

Nonetheless, on the part of the host culture or institution, it would be helpful to ensure that technical, academic, social and psychological support is readily available for students. This satisfies the overseas students and pays dividends in the long run because a satisfied customer is the best possible marketing agents for acquiring new students.” This study is exploratory

and needs refinement and replication in the future. Future researches may include variables such as personality factors, language skills, and emotional regulation.

## References

- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), pp. 131- 154.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84, 191-215.
- Baumeister, R.F., & Leary, M.R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human emotion. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117, 497-529.
- Borg, C. & Cefai, C. (2014). Stress, health and coping among international students at the University of Malta.
- Chapdelaine, R. F., & Alexitch, L. R. (2004). Social skills difficulty: Model of culture shock for international graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 45(2), 167-184.
- Chen, S. H. (2009). A study of international students' life situation-a case study of the international students in University of Twente (Master's thesis, University of Twente)
- Chuah, J. S.C. & Sing, M.K. (2016). International Students' Perspectives on the Importance of Obtaining Social Support from Host National Students.
- Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research*, 209-240.
- Cushner, K., & Karim, A. (2004). Study Abroad At. *Handbook of intercultural training*, 289.
- de Guzman, A. B., Albela, E. J. A., Nieto, D. R. D., Ferrer, J. B. F., & Santos, R. N. (2006). English language learning difficulty of Korean students in a Philippine multidisciplinary university. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 7(2), 152-161.
- Formica, M.J. Enlightened living: Social Acceptance are you threat. *Psychology Today* (2014).
- Freij, A (2009), Positive Psychology: Strengths recipe for success. October 17, 2009
- Frels, R. K., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2013). Administering quantitative instruments with qualitative interviews: A mixed research approach. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 91(2), 184-194.
- Fritz, M. V., Chin, D., & DeMarinis, V. (2008). Stressors, anxiety, acculturation and adjustment among international and North American students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(3), 244-259.
- Garcia, Maria Sheila S. (2015). The Socio-cultural Adaptation, Openness to Culture and Success of Sojourn of Foreign (Japanese) Students in Tarlac City, Philippines. *Proceedings of the Second Asia-Pacific Conference on Global Business, Economics, Finance and Social Sciences*.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106 – 116.
- Hechanova-Alampay, R., Beehr, T.A., Christiansen, N.D. & Van Horn, R.K. (2002) 'Adjustment and strain among domestic and international student sojourners: A longitudinal study'. *School Psychology International* 23(4): 458–474.
- Heikinheimo, P. S., & Shute, J. C. (1986). The adaptation of foreign students: Student views and institutional implications. *Journal of College Student Personnel*
- Inoue, Y. (Ed.). (2006). *Technology and Diversity in Higher Education: New Challenges:*

- New Challenges*. IGI Global.
- Kamara, I. (2012) Stress and its influence on the process of African students' adaptation in Russia. *Society: sociology, psychology, pedagogy*, 2, 66-70.
- Khawaja, N.G. & Stallman, H.M. (2011). Understanding the coping strategies of international students: A qualitative approach. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 21(2), 203-224
- Kosheleva, E. Y., Amarnor, A. J., & Chernobilsky, E. (2015). Stress factors among International and Domestic students in Russia. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 200, 460-466.
- Lee, J. S., Koeske, G. F., & Sales, E. (2004). Social support buffering of acculturative stress: A study of mental health symptoms among Korean international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28(5), 399-414.
- Matsumoto, D., LeRoux, J.A. Bernhard, R. & Gray, H. (2004). Unraveling the psychological correlates of intercultural adjustment potential. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28 (3-4), 281- 309.
- Niemela, P., & Kim, S. (2014). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (pp. 3843-3846). Springer Netherlands.
- Ng, K. (2006). Counselor educators' perceptions of and experiences with international students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 28 (1), 1-19.
- Özturgut, O., & Murphy, C. (2009). Literature vs. practice: challenges for international students in the US. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 22(3), 374-385.
- Poston, Bob, CST (2009). An Exercise in Personal Exploration: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Association of Surgical Technologists – ast.org, p.357
- Poyrazli, S., Arbona, C., Bullington, R., & Pisecco, S. (2001). Adjustment issues of Turkish college students studying in the United States. *College Student Journal*, 35(1), 52-52.
- Sakurai, T., McCall-Wolf, F., & Kashima, E. S. (2010). Building intercultural links: The impact of a multicultural intervention programme on social ties of international students in Australia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34(2), 176-185.
- Schutz, A. and Richards, M. (2003) International students' experience of graduate study in Canada. *Journal of the International Society for Teacher Education* 7(1): 10– 26.
- Sicat, R.M. (2011). Foreign students' cultural adjustment and coping strategies. *International Proceedings of Economics Development & Research*, 5(2).
- Sullivan, C., & Kashubeck-West, S. (2015). The interplay of international students' acculturative stress, social support, and acculturation modes. *Journal of International Students*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Sumer, S. (2009). *International Students' psychological and sociocultural adaptation in the United States*. Georgia State University
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (2001). Coping with cross-cultural transition. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32(5), 636-642.
- Wa-Mbaleka, S., & Joseph, N. A. (2013). International Students' Isolation in the Philippines: Causes, Effects and Coping Strategies. *LCCB Development Education Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(1), 1-1.
- Wilson, J., & Ward, C (2010). Revision and expansion of the sociocultural adaptation scale. *Unpublished manuscript*.
- Wu, H. P., Garza, E., & Guzman, N. (2015). "International student's challenge and adjustment to college." *Education Research International*, 2015.
- Zhai, L. (2002). Studying international students: Adjustment issues and social support.
- Zhang, Z., & Brunton, M. (2007). Differences in living and learning: Chinese international

students in New Zealand. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(2), 124-140.

Zhao, L. (2010) "Socio-Cultural Adjustment of International Students as Expatriates in America"