NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

MASTER'S PROGRAMME

MASTER'S THESIS

A SECOND HOME: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG FOREIGN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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NICOSIA

2018

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2018

DECLARATION

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Date: ..18.../..01.../.2018 , Nicosia

2017 / 2018 Academic Year, FALL Semester

DECLARATION

Type of Thesis: Master ☐   Proficiency in Art ☐   PhD ☐

 STUDENT NO : 20158033

 PROGRAME   : Msc GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY

I Herrick Tatenda CHIWARA, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "A SECOND HOME: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG FOREIGN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS" has been prepared by myself under the guidance and supervison of "Prof. Dr. EBRU CAKICI" in partial fulfilment of The Near East University, Graduate School of Social Sciences regulations and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any Law of Copyrights and has been tested for plagarism and a copy of the result can be found in the Thesis.

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ABSTRACT

A Second Home: An investigation of the factors affecting sociocultural adjustment among foreign international university students

Herrick Chiwara, T.

January, 2018

The number of international university students engaging in intercultural studies, thereby adjusting to cross-cultural situations has risen conspicuously due to effects of globalisation in the last decade. The process of acculturation has seen a number of students facing adaptation challenges both academically and sociocultural. This study investigated the factors affecting the sociocultural adjustment of international university students studying at Near East University in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC). A total of 200 international students participated in the study, female students (n = 89) and male students (n = 111). The mean age for the sample was 22.21 years. The study sampled international students from 22 countries with the majority coming from African countries followed by those from Arab countries. The present study employed purposive sampling technique to select participants for the study. Sociocultural adjustment was measured by sociocultural adaptation scale (SCAS), and the level of depression among students was measured by the Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (ZSDS). International students' age, gender, length of stay in the host country, nationality, and marital status were found to be significant predictive factors of sociocultural adjustment. A significant negative correlation was found between level of depression and sociocultural adjustment. However, accommodation type, socioeconomic status, employment status, and financial status did not yield any significant differences in predicting students' adjustment to the host country. Thus adjustment for the international students was high in academic and work performance than it was in language proficiency. Further, international students with less "cultural distance" to the host country reported better adjustment in language proficiency because of cultural similarities. It is suggested that the host institution could develop curriculum and programmes aimed at providing cultural competence in the classrooms for international students to adjust.

Keywords: *Sociocultural adjustment, Acculturation, International students, Depression*

ÖZ

İkinci Bir Ev: Uluslararası üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyokültürel uyumunu etkileyen faktörler üzerine bir araştırma

Herrick Chiwara, T.

Ocak, 2018

Son yıllarda küreselleşmenin etkisiyle uluslararası üniversite öğrencilerinin sayısı artmıştır ve kültürler arası durumlara uyum sağlama zorunluluğu artmıştır. Kültürlenme sürecinde öğrenciler hem akademik, hem sosyokültürel uyum problemleriyle karşı karşıya kalmaktadır. Bu araştırmada Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde (KKTC) bulunan Yakın Doğu Üniversitesinde öğrenim gören uluslararası üniversite öğrencilerinin sosyokültürel uyumunu etkileyen etkenler araştırılmıştır. Araştırmaya toplam 200 uluslararası öğrenci katılmıştır, öğrencilerin 89'u kadın ve 111'i erkekti. Örneklem için yaş ortalaması 22.21 bulundu. Öğrenciler 22 farklı ülkeden gelmekteydi ve çoğunluğu Afrika ve ardından Arap ülkelerindendi. Çalışmada amaca uygun örneklem yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Sosyokültürel uyum "Sosyokültürel Uyum Ölçeği", ve depresyon düzeyi "Zung Özbildirim Depresyon Ölçeğiyle" belirlenmiştir. Uluslararası öğrencilerin yaşı, cinsiyeti, okudukları ülkede bulunma süresi, milliyeti ve medeni durumu sosyokültürel uyum üzerinde etkili faktörler olarak bulunmuştur. Depresyon düzeyi ve sosyokültürel uyum arasında anlamlı, ters yönde ilişki bulunmuştur. Ancak konaklama tipi, sosyoekonomik düzey, çalışma durumu ve maddi durum uyum konusunda belirleyici bulunmamıştır. Uluslararası öğrenciler için akademik ve iş performansı alanında uyum lisan yeterliliğine göre daha yüksekti. Üniversiteler uluslararası öğrencilerin sosyokültürel uyumunu arttırmak amacıyla destekleyici programlar hazırlamalıdır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Sosyokültüre uyum, kültürlenme, uluslararası öğrenciler, Depresyon*

DEDICATION

To my Darling family, with whom I have found great pleasure in writing this thesis document.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!!!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DSM-V   Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition

SCAS   Sociocultural Adaptation Scale

SPSS   Statistical Package for Social Sciences

TRNC   Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

ZSDS   Zung Self-rating Depression Scale

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Due to globalisation effects and the rising demand for highly skilled and educated human capital, a great may students have been persuaded to search for competitive and financially rewarding academic and professional qualifications. To this effect, the world has experienced a high influx of student migrants and sojourners headed for foreign lands in search of better educational standards. However, this move has created a new host of challenges for the beneficiaries of the transitional process, and these are challenges of adjustment, getting to understand the new cultural environment. As such, international students have become part and parcel of the tertiary educational system of TRNC. Students who attend universities in countries which hold cultural norms and values different from their own have to contend with new social and educational systems, behaviours and expectations. As a result they encounter the numerous adjustment problems common to migrants in general. By falsely assuming that the new society operates like their home country, new students can easily become 'lost in translation' (Zhou, et. al, 2008). It is expected, therefore, that international students will be faced with various levels of psychological distress (Berry, 1997).

In our global understanding of international students, it is imperative to note that by virtue of joining other countries and experiencing a different culture, these international students become a minority group. International students, however , have different sociocultural experiences as compared to refugees, immigrants, and some ethnic minorities in the U.S. Immigration issues, the temporary nature of their stay, the need to succeed academically, and the need to rapidly learn to cope with the demands of living in a foreign culture, and language proficiency, (Johnson & Sandhu, 2007; Misra & Castillo, 2004).

International students are faced with a number of psychological stressors especially when they are trying to settle down in their new social environment. The majority of these university students are in their late teens and approaching adulthood. This age graded difference further exposes the international student to a new set of life experiences, challenges and difficulties. Lim and Pham (2015) points out that, when international students decide to study abroad they are not just risking leaving their family and friends behind, but also entering into an absolutely new environment which will challenge them physically, emotionally and behavioural. From a study done by Singaravelu (2007), international

students studying in the U.S were reported to be having unique adjustment issues and a sense of isolation. Research has also revealed that, International students may be subjected to to some form of institutionalised discrimination with host nationals calling them by derogatory names especially if they look like stereotypes (e.g. terrorists for Middle Eastern sojourners) (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

According to Misra et al. (2003), students studying abroad have to adjust to their new environment and often at times this process of trying to fit in the new academic and cultural system is stressful. Researches done on the topic of sociocultural adjustment of international students have acknowledged serious challenges faced by this student subgroup. These challenges range from academic, sociocultural, financial and sometimes physical (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). Yan and Berliner (2009) found that international students were faced with the academic stress, the strain of language and academic problems, challenges with interaction with the faculty members, and culture differences, 2010; Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). These difficulties will eventually have damaging effects on the international student's psychological wellbeing.

1.1 Prevalence of international students' migration

Statistics show that, during the past two decades, universities around the world have continued to admit a considerable number of international students (Holmes, 2005). Again it is estimated that in 2004 there were 2.5 million international students worldwide (Bohm, Davis, Meares, & Pearce 2002). The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014) reported that the number of international students studying abroad rose by 46% from 2.8 million in 2005 to 4.1 million in 2013. It is projected that the number of international students worldwide will rise to 7.2 million by 2025. This growing trend shows that there is huge demand for foreign education especially from developing countries such as in Africa and Asia. For instance, in 2011, nearly 50% of all international students studying abroad were reportedly doing so in any one of the top five world destinations for higher and tertiary education which are, U.S (17%), United Kingdom (13%), France (6%), Germany(6%), and Australia (6%).This large increase is attributed to the increased demand for higher education, lack of capacity in some countries to meet this demand and most importantly the growing interest of students to study abroad. Research suggests that by 2024, the British Council expects developing countries like China and India, to contribute a larger number of international postgraduate students, however information on demographic and economic trends predicts that Saudi Arabia,

Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria will record substantive increases in the number of outbound post-graduates.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The present study seeks to explore the factors affecting sociocultural adjustment among foreign international university students, especially when these students come from a qualitatively different socio-cultural background as compared to the host nationals. Previous research on international students' sociocultural adjustment and psychological well-being indicates that individuals who leave for other countries to pursue academic studies are faced with numerous cognitive and behavioural appraisal challenges before they can establish a meaningful level of fit. The study is influenced by the growing number of students migrating overseas specifically to Northern Cyprus.

The challenges international students experience in trying to deal with their everyday activities (e.g. such as finding the nearest food outlet, restaurant, clinic, police station, etc), in addition to academic demands and sociocultural issues leaves a trace of psychological problems which manifest as depression and other anxiety related illnesses. There is need therefore to establish the relationship between depression level and sociocultural adjustment among the group of international students. It is hypothesized that poor sociocultural adjustment is strongly correlated to higher levels of depression.

Furthermore, these new international students do not speak the local language, as a result basic communication is going to be a great challenge that is most likely to inconvenience the individual and consequently cause psychological and sociocultural consequences. Previous research findings reveal that a great many international students studying in the USA, Western Europe and Australia comes from developing countries. As such the interplay between demographic factors such as socioeconomic status, and sociocultural adjustment will be measured.

Unlike previous research on international students, the main focus was on factors contributing to international students' academic success (Halamandaris & Power, 1999), the current research goes beyond academic issues and tries to unravel the day to day experiences of the international student. The research study is of paramount importance in trying to bring out the psychosocial concerns of international students currently residing, and studying in TRNC. These concerns, when identified, will act as a basis to address the various socio-cultural adaptation strategies that can be used to alleviate the international students' lives.

The number of international students is on a constant rise, globally, and so is the research study on the study. However, the most common of these studies are based in the Western world and mainly focusing on international students of Asian descent (Berry et al., 2011; Brisset, et al., 2010; Zheng, Sang, & Wang, 2004). This study, however, seeks to close this gap due hence it is being conducted in a different geopolitical and cultural context. Furthermore, understanding the acculturation phenomena in one group in one society is important, but such limited results may hinder the generalization of findings beyond the setting and groups investigated, (Berry, 2006). The present research differs in that it will investigate acculturation in more than one group of foreign international students, (e.g. Africans, Arabic, European, etc).

A critical review of literature illuminates that, in spite of depression and anxiety being the by-products of stress, a little research has been done on this subject in relation to international students especially in the U.S (Arthur, 1998). Considering the fact that there is limited research on depression and anxiety among international students, the present study seeks to address this issue by investigating the relationship between depression level of international students and their sociocultural adjustment.

1.3   Aims and objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study is to investigate the factors that affect the sociocultural adaptation of international university students in Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC).For the purpose of this study, the following questions will be addressed;

- What are the socio-demographic factors affecting international student sociocultural adjustment?
- How does the level of depression experienced by international students affect their sociocultural adaptation?

1.4   Study hypotheses

It is hypothesized that;

- There will be a significant difference between socio-demographic factors (age, gender, length of stay, etc) and sociocultural adjustment of international students.
- There will be a significant difference between the level of depression and sociocultural adjustment among international students.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Results from this study, however, should be interpreted with caution due to a number of limitations. Firstly the research study used self-report questionnaires to solicit information from the participants. The use of self-report questionnaires pose great risk of the social desirability effect in which participants might be tempted to respond favourably to appear socially desirable and nice.

Secondly the sample size was not big and evenly distributed enough due to the selective sampling procedure that was used. As such generalizing these results to the full population international students studying at the university should be treated with great care because there is low external validity.

To add, the cross sectional research design employed in this study makes it difficult to establish a cause and effect relationship on the factors affecting sociocultural adjustment. Thus results from this study remain unclear in relation to making conclusions about causes of sociocultural adjustment.

1.6 Definition of key terms

1.6.1 Acculturation- the process of change over time that takes place within individuals who have completed a socialization process in one culture and then comes into continuous, prolonged, first-hand contact with a new and unfamiliar culture.

1.6.2 International student(s) - the term international students is usually used to refer to all students who are foreign to the host institution's country. However, these can be short term exchange students or long term foreign students.

1.6.3 Psychological adjustment–the feeling of cognitive, emotional and behavioural well-being and satisfaction, and ability to develop skills necessary to interact effectively with host culture

1.6.4 Sociocultural adjustment–the acquisition of appropriate skills that are socially suitable to the host culture, values and beliefs which gives one the general competence of mastering everyday life in a new culture.

1.6.5 Depression– It is also called "clinical depression" or a "depressive disorder" is a mood disorder that causes distressing symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter looks at previous research studies that have been done on the subject of sociocultural adjustment, and factors affecting its success and or failure among international university students. A critical review will be offered explaining how the present research is of importance to the study of sociocultural adjustment. A conceptual framework will be given which shows theories and concepts from which this study is derived.

2.1 Reasons for studying abroad.

Student mobility has been linked to different factors. It is important to note that, despite all the challenges that come with migration and moving across the borders, there are some motivating factors compelling students to study in particular international tertiary institutions.

2.1.1 Academic and Professional reasons

Some of the reasons for studying abroad include diverse need to gain professional credential, development of proficiency in English. Studies have shown, for instance, that access to education, the quality of education, employment prospects, and the desire for qualifications with worldwide recognition are some of the most important drivers leading students to pursue higher education in a foreign country (Cubillo, Sanchez & Cervino, 2006; Mazzarol & Souter, 2002). Thus, the lack of adequate educational opportunities in the home country and the appeal of better opportunities abroad are some of the factors that influence cross-border mobility.

2.1.2 Sociocultural reasons

Research findings show that students seeking higher education from foreign countries contributes to the long term success (i.e. financial and cultural) of the host country and institutions. There is bound to be a vast exchange of cultural knowledge and ideas between the international university student and the host nationals (e.g. fellow students and university staff) through social interaction, the academic process, and interplay of ideas, values and traditions (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010). By studying abroad students from other countries are able to build business and social contacts with the locals. For students who live in parts of the world where English is not an official language, studying abroad has allowed them a chance to learn and become proficient in the English language.

2.2 International Students' Adjustment Problems

The international student population is growing by each day globally, for instance the transition of students from one country or region to another in search of better standards in university education has become so frequent (Brisset et al., 2010).Regardless of this positive upward trajectory in international student transition, research investigating the adaptation of international students has consistently reported that a great number of students usually struggle to adapt or "fit in" the host country's cultural system. In light with student adaptation, international students are thus subjected to a number of challenges which they have to effectively deal with in order to fit in the new cultural context. Notably, most adjustment studies have found that international students experience more adjustment problems as compared to their domestic counterparts thus leaving them with limited resources to cope with those problems (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Researchers posit that international students fail to quickly adapt due to a range of demands placed on the individual. Some of these demands include pressure created by language difficulties, financial problems, academic difficulties, lack of social support, loneliness, and other sociocultural demands.

2.2.1   Language difficulties

Language is one of the most important differential factor between two or more cultures, and it poses a major challenge to migrant adaptation. Students from different countries and cultural backgrounds should adjust quickly and learn really fast if they enter into foreign speaking countries. Students who speak a variety of the host language may still face difficulties understanding local accents or idiomatic expressions. Research investigating the adaptation of international students report language difficulty as one of their biggest concerns. Several studies also conclude that international students possessing higher language proficiency report better and relatively quick adjustment (Ng, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). According to Meza and Gazzoli (2010), international students suffer a great deal of communication challenges when they get to new cultural environments. For instance, they noted that understanding and interpretation of non-verbal cues is a stressful experience for a lot of foreign students, and this implies to classroom behaviour such as finger snapping or shoulder tapping.

2.2.2   Academic Adjustment difficulties

Another major challenge faced by international students studying abroad relates to their educational success and satisfaction. Often, international students report feeling pressured to perform better when studying abroad, especially those on scholarship funded programmes. Again International students are often faced with the demands of a new and unfamiliar educational system, which causes them great confusion and frustration. Previous researches have revealed that often at times international students experience significant academic adjustment difficulties, and their academic needs are poorly understood within institutions they learn (Butcher & McGrath, 2004; Yan & Berliner 2009). When students are poorly adjusted to the local language and or language proficiency they risk facing difficulties in understanding simple academic instructions, notices and announcements.

Poyrazli and Grahame (2007) found out that international students reported experiencing problems relating to differences in study techniques, test taking, or classroom instruction. Yu and Wright (2016) in their study with international higher degree research students, found that academic challenges were reported in terms of adapting to learning styles, and the use of English as a medium of instruction for the non-native English speaking participants. For example, when non-native English speaking students are instructed to do some class or group presentation in their course assessment review, they are bound to experience a lot of stress. Given the fact that doing a class presentation will require different set of communication tools and capability, the student's coping ability is greatly challenged. This will further increase pressure on their academic manoeuvres.

2.2.3   Financial difficulties

Another set of international students' adjustment problems relates to their financial demands and capability. A sound financial base is necessary for international students to live and study peacefully in a foreign country. Meagre financial resources can turn a somewhat normal situation into a hostile one due to failure to meet basic demands of life. As a result financial factors have been cited as one of the challenges which threatens international students' adjustment to the new environment. Despite having some students travelling abroad with hordes of cash, there are others who still struggle financially and cannot pay for their daily meals or afford to return home during semester breaks or holidays (Butcher & McGrath, 2004). For example, students coming from most developing nations especially in Africa and East Asia struggle to make ends meet when studying abroad because of their countries'

diminished economies, and sometimes inflexible monetary transfer regulations forbidding them to receive cash from their countries. In instances where students can work, they are usually not allowed to work outside the host university, or to take good paying jobs as these require good communication skills and professional qualifications.

2.2.4   Social Interaction difficulties

Students travelling abroad leave behind their family and friends, and due to this detachment students experience a deep sense of loss, while some even go through separation anxiety. Quite a number of studies have reported that international students often report feeling isolated from host students and locals, and they again face difficulties making social relations with host students (Fritz et al., 2008; Maundeni, et al., 2010). A number of factors can be attributed to the failure by international students to form meaningful social relations with host students. Previous studies have identified language and cultural differences as barriers to forming relationships between international students and host nationals. For example, differences in social interaction style may hinder international students from establishing close relationships with host students (Cross, 1995).

Studies also show that international students staying with their family adjusted fairly well. On the other hand, for those whose family members were not present, reported to be having a hard time as they are used to being near their family members. (Maundeni, et al., 2010). Further, Li and Gasser (2005) investigated the relationship among four variables (i.e. sociocultural adjustment, cross-cultural self-efficacy, ethnicity, and social contact with host nationals) in a sample of 117 international students from Asian background doing undergraduate and postgraduate studies at two Mid-western universities. They results revealed that cross-cultural efficacy on the adjustment of international students was greatly affected by their persistent contact with the local students and nationals.

2.2.5   Loneliness, anxiety and distress

Lack of social support and friendships lead to great feelings of loneliness and homesickness among international students. Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found many international students who were studying in the United States to be extremely homesick and lonely, while those who formed more social relationships with host nationals felt less lonely and enjoyed themselves more. In a research study by Meza and Gazzoli (2011) related to acculturation and cross cultural adaptation of Tourism and Hospitality international students in Switzerland, results showed that, although the control group was fairly large,

psychological distress (i.e. loneliness, anxiety and uncertainty) was still visible in international students. The research also revealed that a great number of students experienced pre-arrival anxiety and uncertainty in Switzerland (Meza & Gazzoli, 2011). According to the same study, the students experienced sociocultural stress in the form of cultural distance, language problems, differences in communication styles, and social interaction.

2.2.6   Xenophobia

Xenophobia is an anxiety related disorder in which individuals have a fear of other people, more so if people of different cultural backgrounds come into contact or are put in situations where cooperation is inevitable. International students sometimes face xenophobic attacks from people in the host country. These attacks are portrayed in the form of institutionalised discrimination and racial prejudice. According to Maundeni, et al. (2011), a significant number of the international students indicated that locals did not like them and were not hospitable and friendly enough. Respondents also mentioned that local students had a tendency to use their local language in group discussions which left the international students feeling socially alienated. Campbell (2003) points out that resentment shown by locals represents an inherent fear of perceived threat to the cultural, economic and political stability of the nation.

2.2.7   Role strain

International students who are either married or travelling with their children often have to play more than one social role, that is being a student and being a parent or spouse. Maundeni and colleagues (2010) also mentioned role strain as a sociocultural problem experienced by participants in their study. A significant number of respondents mentioned role strain as a factor that had adverse effects on their adjustment. This issue was mentioned largely by older students of both sexes. For example, women who were living with their families complained about difficulties of balancing home and school responsibilities (Maundeni, et al., 2010). On the other hand, married males who had left their spouses complained about the difficulties that they experienced in performing domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing. Results of their study showed that role strain did not only affect adjustment of international students to higher education, but that of local students too. However, the experience was more stressful for international students since they are usually faced with numerous other challenges as they try to assimilate in foreign countries.

2.3 Sociocultural and Psychological Adaptation

2.3.1 Conceptual Framework

The most frequently referred to theoretical perspective on sociocultural adaptation studies is the U-curve theory by Lysgaard (1995). This theory was first used in a study of Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the United States. The theory suggests that the adjustment process of international students in a different cultural context follows a U-shaped curved graph over time. The first stage of the theory suggests that the international student's adjustment process begins with the excitement and overwhelmed experience of having travelled abroad for the first time, presumably seeing and doing new things. The excitement of the first stage loses its attraction when the need for more intimate personal contact and interaction with friendship groups becomes important. If this need is not satisfied, the individual might experience feelings of loneliness and depression. He proposed that the greatest adjustment difficulties were thus encountered by sojourners or international students during the first 6–12 months of their stay in a foreign country. This, he compared adjustment problems experienced by either those sojourners who had been abroad for a period less than 6 months or more than 18 months.

Thomas and Harrell (1994) states that theory possesses good descriptive value and that it has guided researchers in their studies on adjustment process of international sojourners and students. Despite all this praise, the theory is heavily criticized for a number of weaknesses, mainly because (a) it neither provides detailed information on the adjustment tools that international students employ nor does it explain why each of the different stages of adjustment starts and ends (Furnham and Bochner, 1982; Thomas and Harrell, 1994). (b) The theory is overgeneralized to explain diverse experiences among sojourners regarding how they adjust to the host country leaving critical factors that are unique to certain sojourners' adjustment process (Thomas and Harrell, 1994).

2.4 Adaptation and Models of Adaptation

Castro (2003) identifies adaptation as a process of adjusting to the existing situations in an unfamiliar environment. In the present research adaptation and adjustment will be used simultaneously. In some way, adaptation describes those personal long-term goals of attaining psychological well-being, mental health, and acquisition of relevant cultural and social skills.

2.4.1 Psychological adaptation

According to Ward (2001) psychological adaptation can be better appreciated form a stress and coping context. However, sociocultural adaptation derives from a culture-learning model. Psychological adaptation is characterised by personality traits, coping style, and existing social support. Psychological adjustment is related to the emotional aspect of acculturating to a new cultural environment as such it includes evaluations of anxiety, depression, self-esteem, and satisfaction with life. Psychological adjustment pertains to personality, life changes, coping styles, and social support (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Psychological well-being is dependent on the success or failure of sociocultural adjustment. The concurrent nature existing between psychological and sociocultural adjustment explains the fact that when international students fail to socially adjust their psychological well-being is affected hence most of them will experience depressive symptoms.

2.4.2 Sociocultural adaptation

Sociocultural adaptation is defined by the individual's ability to fit in the new sociocultural environment. This demands that the individual effectively establish social contact with the host nationals or members of the new society. This ability to fit in is characterised by acquisition of relevant social and cultural tools such as communication and interaction skills to enable the individual to navigate through the social mainstream. A number of factors help influence sociocultural adaptation, and these are length of stay in the host country, cultural competence and language proficiency (Ward, 1997).

Failure to handle daily social situations and demands will lead to psychological consequences amongst which earlier scholars have termed "acculturative stress". The most common and frequently used research measures of sociocultural adjustment examine this level of fit (i.e. understanding local language and culture, academic and work performance, and social interaction) to determine whether or not the international students have managed to adjust to their new cultural environment (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

2.4.3   Factors affecting Sociocultural Adjustment

International students are faced with a number of challenges which in turn influence sociocultural adjustment. For instance, they have to live with the separation from their family and cultural norms, the foreign language difficulties, and changes in their socio-economic status. Given this scenario, international students' ability to resolve these challenges and problems associated with moving abroad, is a big predictor of their sociocultural adaptation process.

2.4.4   Sociocultural Adaptation Outcomes

International students either adjust positively or negatively to their new environment, the result of both is hinged on the various ways the students choose to interact and subsequently fit into their new environment. Research has found that acculturating individuals with a low cultural distance with the host culture experience less sociocultural adaptation difficulties because of similarities in cultural values (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). On the one hand, anxiety, depression, social alienation, psychosomatic symptoms, and identity role confusion result from negative sociocultural adjustment. On the other hand, positive adaptation to new cultural environment is assessed through a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, stable mental health, high self-esteem, and competent cultural and social skills (Berry & Sam, 1997).

2.4.5   Personal characteristics

A study by Sumer et al. (2008) explored several individual characteristics such as age, gender, country of origin or race, English language proficiency and length of residence and their effects on level of depression and anxiety towards sociocultural adjustment of international students. The subjects consisted of 440 international students with a mean age of 26.15 years. Their results showed that higher levels of depression and anxiety were reported by those students whose social interaction with the host nationals and or social support was poor, and thereby struggling to properly adjust to their new environment.

2.4.6   Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction is one variable that strongly determines the level of sociocultural adjustment among international university students. It can however be measured in many ways which include financial stability, social contact and support networks, academic success, and physical fitness. It has been revealed throughout literature that international

students who obtain a scholarship or who have alternative sources of income may feel much more relieved and satisfied (Swami, Arteche, Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2010). Previous research studies have shown that support from friends, perceived social network among friends, and social network satisfaction are closely related to international students' sociocultural adjustment and levels of depression. Hence, students with adequate social support (i.e. from family or friends, or host nationals) tend to feel more satisfied and experience higher adjustment levels (Misra et al., 2003)

In one study done by Yu and Wright (2016) in Australia exploring the relationship of sociocultural adaptation and academic adaptation to students' satisfaction, the participants highlighted the importance of administrative staff in helping international students understand university procedures, including how to access printing services and use library resources. The participants reported that this could help ease their academic challenge and improve on student satisfaction (Yu, B & Wright, E, 2016). These results shows that if the international student is satisfied he or she will adjust to the new sociocultural context quickly and easily as compared to when they are not feeling satisfied.

2.4.7   Coping style

From a stress and coping perspective, it is hypothesized that individuals can manage stressful events of life, thereby achieving either negative or positive adaptation outcomes. The variables that affect positive adaptation are closely related to a wide array of coping styles such as being task-oriented, emotion-oriented or avoidance-oriented towards stressors (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Similarly, Kashima and Loh (2006) investigated some 100 Asian international students studying in Melbourne. Their research findings showed that individuals' English language proficiency, length of residence in host country had a positive effect on the students' adjustment process, whereas lack of frequent social contact with the host nationals impaired adjustment. The stressors encountered by international students, therefore, can be alleviated by allowing satisfaction among the students, internal locus of control, and use of humour.

To add, international students' cultural background has been found to have a direct association with both acculturative stress and coping ability. Smith and Khawaja (2011) have concluded that international students of Asian culture tend to experience more acculturative stress than did their European counterparts. It is believed that, Asian international students are more emotionally strong, keeping their negative emotions to themselves than seek help

from others. Seeking help on issues of personal feelings is regarded as a failure in self-control, and inability to deal with own emotions (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

2.5   Effects of Sociodemographic Factors on Sociocultural Adjustment

Previous research findings have shown a strong relationship between demographic factors such as age, gender, race/ nationality, length of stay in a foreign country and the level of depression and consequently the rate of sociocultural adjustment.

2.5.1   Gender

Research has found that female university students with higher levels of social support experienced lower levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms, whereas male students' anxiety levels did not correlate with social support. Several previous studies conducted to assess levels of psychological distress among international students reported that female students were more likely to suffer emotional, behavioural and somatic symptoms to stress than their male counterparts (Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003). However, Poyrazli, et. al (2002) reported different research findings from their study. It was found that male foreign university students had high depression scores than female students, when the UCLA Loneliness scale was administered. The degree of reactivity to social and psychological stressors between the two genders thus can be used to predict the rate of sociocultural adjustment among international students.

2.5.2   Age

A number of research studies have been conducted on the subject of sociocultural adjustment of international university students, specifically focusing on the effects of age towards adjustment. For instance, Oei and Notowidjojo (1990) found that age was a significant predictor of depressive symptoms when they investigated international students in relation to the impact of life change on adjustment. Depressive symptoms were more prevalent in in older students than in younger students.However, in another study with Japanese teenage exchange students, age failed to predict depressive symptoms among this international students subgroup (Furukawa, 1997). The discrepancy between the results from the studies by Oei and Notowidjojo (1990) and Furukawa (1997) can be attributed to several factors such as measurement bias, and different levels of social support for example, students who had volunteer foster parents showed that the age variable was not a significant predictor of depression.

2.5.3   Race and ethnicity

Previous research study investigating the effects of race and ethnicity on the sociocultural adjustment of international students revealed that adjustment difficulty levels rise when the international students report higher cultural differences. Lacina (2002) found out that language is seen as a form of discrimination that hinders individuals from adapting to new social environment. Tafarodi and Smith (2001) conducted a study to compare Malaysian and British students attending a British university. The study measured differential sensitivity to life stressful events using individualism-collectivism as a cultural dimension. Malaysian students reportedly displayed higher levels of depressive symptoms as compared to British students. Students from Malaysia showed through their responses that positive social life events were associated with low levels of depression, while negative social life events were related to high levels of depression. Therefore, it was concluded that collectivist cultural orientation was positively associated with vulnerability to social experiences, unlike individualistic cultural orientation. These studies indicated that when an international student from a collectivist culture attends college in an individualist culture, he or she might experience higher levels of anxiety because of cultural dissimilarities and therefore prolonging their sociocultural adjustment.

2.5.4   Length of stay in a foreign country

According to Sumer et. al. (2008), there is a relationship between length of residence in a foreign country and international students' adjustment experiences as supported by the U-curve theory developed by Lysgaard (1955). This theory indicates that the adjustment process of international students in a host culture follows a U-shaped curve over time. Research findings reviewed that international students staying in another country for more than one year reported high levels of depressive symptoms when compared to host students. Further, international students with less than a year in a foreign country reported less psychological problems than the host nationals (Sumer et. al., 2008). Also, international students who had been in the United States from two to four years showed lower adaptation than those who had been in the United States more than four years. It is evident that adjustment and depression levels were manageable, the longer international students stayed in a foreign country than when they had limited time.

2.6   Depression in the context of University Students

Depression is a pervasive mood disorder that cause feelings of sadness, hopelessness, helplessness, and worthlessness. It can be minimal to severe with symptoms of apathy, little

appetite, difficulty sleeping, low self-esteem, and low grade fatigue. It can also be major depression with mood symptoms during the day, diminished interest in daily activities, weight loss, insomnia or hypersomnia, feelings of guilt almost daily and recurring thoughts of death or suicide (DSM-V).

International university students just like any other students encounter numerous challenges in their day to day educational life, for example, psychosocial and financial difficulties (Dyson & Renk, 2006). The ever increasing technological developments around the world's institutions have, however, made the university environment a lonely place with everybody concerned with their gadgets more than socialising with fellow students. This lonely atmosphere devoid of adequate social interaction and leave many students, especially first year students, at increased risk of depression (Connell et al., 2007).

2.6.1   Symptoms and Causes of Depression among University Students

University students manifest depression through various cognitive, emotive, motivational and physical symptoms. Examples of cognitive and emotional symptoms of depression are lack of concentration, self-persecution, hopelessness, helplessness, pessimism and sadness. Depressed students are often characterised by a lack of energy, academic motivation and poor performance. Heiligenstein, Guenther, Hsu, & Herman (1996) notes that the symptoms of depression among students are noticed through reduced energy in school business, and absconding of classes. International university students encounter a number of academic stressors which leave them vulnerable and at risk of depression. For instance, when students move to other countries they must meet accommodation responsibilities, and some will want to look for part time jobs to sustain their finances. It becomes challenging for students to juggle between academic work and other social responsibilities hence causing depression (Khajawa & Duncanson, 2008). Due to some financial responsibilities, students are found playing both academic and socioeconomic roles. Eventually they are burdened by course work and employment responsibilities resulting in subsequent exhaustion and fatigue (Mikolajczyk et al., 2008).

2.6.2   Prevalence of Depression

A number of research studies have reported significant relationship between gender and prevalence of depression (Ozer, 2015; Kendler, et.al, 2001; Cryanowski, et. al, 2000). However, there seem to be a limited number of studies done to investigate international university students and their susceptibility to depression. But a few studies on depression, a

relationship between depression and sociocultural adjustment (Mikolajczyk et al., 2008). In a study to examine differences between the depression scores for university students from three countries, Khawaja, Santos, Habibi and Smith (2013) found out that female students were more depressed than male students on the USDI scale.

2.7 Summary of the Literature review

A close review and analysis of previous literature of the factors affecting sociocultural adjustment among international university students, shows that there are a number of variables associated with success and failure of adjustment. Demographic factors which greatly affect sociocultural adjustment have been found to be age, gender, length of stay in a foreign country, and race. Apart from seeking professional, financial and sociocultural benefits, studying abroad as a growing phenomenon is a stressful and challenging experience. International students are faced with a number of challenges which range from academic, psychological, financial and sociocultural.

Adaptation or adjustment has been shown to carry two connotations which are psychological and sociocultural. Psychological adjustment is measured according to the individual's response to stress and ability to cope. On the other hand sociocultural adjustment is measured by individual's ability to "fit in" into the new environment. There are a number of factors that either promote or hinder adjustment of international students and these are: language proficiency, social support networks, financial stability level, personal characteristics, and coping style.

Further, the process of moving to foreign institutions of higher education, just like any other form of migration, can be a very stressful and challenging experience. Therefore, research data elaborating on the various coping strategies individuals take to successfully adjust to their new cultures is very important. There are a number of factors which should be taken into cognisance which affect the adjustment of international students. Once the experiences of international students have been understood, host institutions should introduce various cultural-oriented programmes which offer support to new international students. This effort would assist professionals such as psychologists, counsellors, and university staff to identify major challenges thus better preparing for sojourning students both from home country and in host country.

III.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This chapter will describe the design, sample, participants, measures, procedure and setting, data analysis and ethical considerations that were used in this study. With this information a clearer understanding can be made for those interested in the study.

3.2 Sampling

This case study adopted a non-random sampling method because the researcher was looking for a specific group of individuals (i.e. international students). Therefore, convenience sampling was used to select suitable individuals to participate in the study. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling technique in which the researcher targets a special group of individuals and selects according to availability and proximity of research participants.

3.3 Participants

The researcher took a sample of international students currently studying for various degree programmes at Near East University. The total number of participants in this study was 200. Selection criteria was used to identify mainly students coming from Africa, Middle East, Europe, and Asia.

3.4 Instruments

3.4.1 Socio-Demographic Questionnaire

The following socio-demographic and migration-specific items were assessed. The questionnaire contained questions related to the inclusion criteria: gender, age, country of origin, marital status, education level, employment status, income, and length of stay in TRNC and previous experience of study abroad, basic source of income.

3.4.2 The Zung Self-Rating Depression Scale (ZDS)

The ZDS is a 20-item self-report questionnaire which is widely used as a screening tool, covering affective, psychological and somatic symptoms associated with depression. The questionnaire takes about 10 minutes to complete, and items are framed in terms of positive and negative statements. It can be effectively used in a variety of settings, including primary care, psychiatric, drug trials and various research situations. Each item is scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 4. A total score is derived by summing the individual item scores, and ranges from 20 to 80. Most people with depression score between 50 and 69, while a score of 70 and above indicates severe depression. The scores provide indicative

ranges for depression severity that can be useful for clinical and research purposes, but the Zung scale cannot take the place of a comprehensive clinical interview for confirming a diagnosis of depression. The ZDS also provides a simple tool for monitoring changes in depression severity over time in research studies.

3.4.3   The Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS)

Searle and Ward (1990) were the pioneers of the SCAS, and used it in their study of cross-cultural transition and adaptation of Malaysian and Singaporean students in New Zealand. The SCAS is concerned with the skills that are required to manage everyday social situations in a new cultural context. The most recent version of the SCAS (with 29 items) has explored the addition of more cognitive domains. The SCAS is used to measure the extent to which international students find their behaviours and attitudes appropriate in dealing with perceived sociocultural difficulties in the new environment. This scale has an overall internal consistency of 0.92 and consists of five subscales, i.e. (Interpersonal Communication, Academic/Work Performance, Personal Interests & Community Involvement, Ecological Adaptation; Language Proficiency). Participants are expected to rate their competence at certain behaviours with (1=not at all competent; 5=extremely competent). The SCAS is a flexible instrument in that it can be easily modified according to the characteristics of the international student sample, and it has consistently proven to be reliable and valid (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

3.5   Procedure and Setting

The study targeted international students at Near East University. However, the researcher moved from one faculty to another for convenience of the participants. Data was collected a month after the start of the academic semester. Participants were assigned with a self-report questionnaire and a written explanation of the study. Participants completed the self-report questionnaire in classes in their respective faculties and departments, the process took no more than 10 mins to complete.

3.6   Data Analysis

The analysis of data received from participants was analysed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Science (SPSS) version 21. As with the preliminary analysis, in order to test whether the distribution of the collected data is parametric or not, a normality test was conducted. Descriptive statistics such as means and frequencies of responses were used to illustrate trends in the sample.

3.7   Ethical considerations.

In line with the ethical guidelines of social sciences research at Near East University, ethical approval was sought by the researcher before conducting the current study. Two ethical principles are considered to be the important for this study, i.e. the principle of autonomy and beneficence.

3.7.1   Autonomy

Individuals who volunteer to partake in any research study reserve the right to choose and decide on their actions, contributions, and resources without coercion. The researcher and the society in general have the moral obligation to safeguard and protect this right. In other words, the principle of autonomy states that the research participant has absolute power to either participate or not in the research study. Therefore, the researcher should seek informed consent from the participant, and is obliged to keep all information of the study confidential.

3.7.2   Beneficence

The second principle relates to beneficence. The principle of beneficence dictates that in every research, the test administrator has the moral obligation to do well, minimize any risk while maximizing benefits for the individual and subsequently the general population. Following the principles of autonomy and beneficence, the researcher made sure that the research design was appropriate and sound, and that the research process safeguarded the welfare of the research participants.

IV.   RESULTS

The present study consist of 200 participants, i.e. 89 (44.5%) Female and 111 (55.5%) Male. Age ranged from 17-35 years with a mean age of 22.21 years (+/- 3.07).

Table 1.

Frequency distribution of participants according to socio-demographic characteristics.

		n	n (%)
Gender	Female	89	44.5
	Male	111	55.5
Age	20 and below	59	29.5
	21-25	115	57.5
	26-30	22	11
	31 and above	4	02
Marital status	Single	181	90.5
	Married	09	04.5
	Other	10	05
Nationality	Zimbabwe	98	49
	Turkey	19	09.5
	Rest of Africa	58	29
	Arab countries	23	11.5
	Other	02	01
No. years in TRNC	1 year	61	30.5
	2 years	86	43
	3 years	40	20
	4 and above	13	06.5
Degree program	Undergraduate	168	84
	Graduate-Master	24	12
	Graduate-PhD	08	04
Nature of accommodation	Living alone	43	21.5
	Living with friend(s)	124	62
	Living with family	33	16.5
Socioeconomic status of family	Low	10	05
	Medium	160	80
	High	30	15
Financial situation	Income is enough	88	44
	Income hardly enough	50	25
	Besides income, working	62	31
Current work situation	Full time	13	06.5
	Part time	50	25
	Not working	137	68.5

The results from Table 1 indicate that 111 (55.5%) of the participants were male and 89 (44.5%) were female. 59 (29.5%) of the participants were aged 20 years and below while 22 (11%) were aged between 26 and 30 years. majority of the participants 115 (57.5) were aged between 21 and 25 years while only 4 (2%) of the participants were 31 years and above. Most of the participants 181 (90.5%) in the study reported being single, while only 9 (4.5%) were married, and 10 (5%) of the participants reported Other. Of the participants who took part in the study 168 (84%) were doing undergraduate studies, 24 (12%) were doing Master studies, and only 8 (4%) were doing PhD studies.

The participants' length of stay in TRNC at the time of study varied between 1 year 61 (30.5%), 2 years 86 (43%), 3 years 40 (20%), and those who have stayed for four and more years 13 (6.5%). About half of the participants in the study came from Zimbabwe 98 (49%), 58 (29%) of the participants came from other African countries i.e. (Nigeria, Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa, Egypt, Uganda, Congo, the Gambia, Namibia, and Kenya), 23 (11.5%) of the participants came from the Arab countries i.e. (Syria, Pakistan, Palestine, Yemen, Azerbaijan, Qatar, and Jordan), 19 (9.5%) of the participants were from Turkey and only 2   participants were from Canada and India respectively. Most of the participants reported living with friend(s) during their school days (62%). While 43 (21.5%) of the participants lived alone, and only 33 participants reported living with their families (16.5%).

Participants perceived the socio-economic status of their families as follows, Low (SES) 10 (5%), Medium (SES) 160 (80%), and High (SES) 30 (15%). 88 (44%) of the participants reported their income as enough, while 50 25%) of the participants said it was hardly enough. Besides their incomes 62 (31%) participants had to work. Majority of the participants were not working (68.5%), 50 participants reported having part time jobs, and only a few were employed full time (6.5%).

Table 2.

The Mann Whitney U-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of ZSDS subscales according to the gender of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Core depressive factor	Female	89	113.54	10105.50		
	Male	111	90.04	9994.5	3778.500	0.004*
Cognitive factor	Female	89	111.62	9934.50		
	Male	111	91.58	10165.50	3949.500	0.014*
Anxiety factor	Female	89	103.63	9223.00		
	Male	111	97.99	10877.00	4661.000	0.490
Somatic factor	Female	89	100.71	8963.00		
	Male	111	100.33	11137.00	4921.000	0.963

*p≤ 0.05

The Table 2 related to the Mann Whitney U-test of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the gender of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between anxiety factor (u=4661, p>0.05) and somatic factor (u=4921, p>0.05). The female participants scored higher than male participants in core depressive factor subscale (u=3778.500, p=0.004) and fewer scores in cognitive factor subscale than male participants (u=3949.500, p=0.014).

Table 3.

The Mann Whitney U-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of SCAS subscales according to the gender of the participants.

Subscales of SCAS	Gender	n	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Interpersonal communication	Female	89	101.04	8992.50	4891.50	0.906
	Male	111	100.07	11107.50		
Academic and Work performance	Female	89	95.10	8464.00	4459.00	0.236
	Male	111	104.83	11636.00		
Personal interests and Community involvement	Female	89	99.77	8879.50	4874.50	0.871
	Male	111	101.09	11220.50		
Ecological adaptation	Female	89	99.13	8822.50	4817.50	0.763
	Male	111	101.60	11277.50		
Language proficiency	Female	89	96.99	8632.50	4627.50	0.439
	Male	111	103.31	11467.50		

p≥ 0.05

The Table 3 related to the Mann Whitney U-test results of the comparison of the SCAS subscales according to the gender of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the mean ranks of female and male participants between interpersonal communication (4891.50, $p>0.05$), academic/ work performance (u=4459, $p>0.05$), personal interests and community involvement (u=4874.50, $p>0.05$), ecological adaptation (u=4817.50, $p>0.05$), and language proficiency (u=4627, $p>0.05$).

Table 4.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of ZSDS subscales according to age of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Age	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	P
Core depressive factor	20 and below	59	104.51			
	21-25	115	102.95	3.617	3	0.306
	26-30	22	79.93			
	30 and above	4	84.00			
Cognitive factor	20 and below	59	101.88			
	21-25	115	104.74	4.828	3	0.185
	26-30	22	81.64			
	30 and above	4	62.00			
Anxiety factor	20 and below	59	109.62			
	21-25	115	98.97	3.119	3	0.374
	26-30	22	85.93			
	30 and above	4	90.13			
Somatic factor	20 and below	59	114.71			
	21-25	115	96.60	5.943	3	0.114
	26-30	22	85.45			
	30 and above	4	85.63			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 4 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to age of the participants, shows that there are no statistically significant differences among the age groups between core depressive factor (x^2=3.617, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=4.828, p>0.05), anxiety (x^2=3.119, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=5.943, p>0.05).

Table 5.

The Kruskal Willis H-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of SCAS subscales according to age of the participants.

SCAS Subscales	Age	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	P
Interpersonal communication	20 and below	59	94.97			
	21-25	115	99.93			
	26-30	22	112.73	2.683	3	0.443
	30 and above	4	131.38			
Academic and work performance	20 and below	59	84.19			
	21-25	115	103.82			
	26-30	22	130.66	11.637	3	0.009*
	30 and above	4	79.75			
Personal interests and community involvement	20 and below	59	110.55			
	21-25	115	93.88	5.025	3	0.170
	26-30	22	101.50			
	30 and above	4	137.00			
Ecological adaptation	20 and below	59	89.14			
	21-25	115	101.89	5.415	3	0.144
	26-30	22	120.86			
	30 and above	4	116.13			
Language proficiency	20 and below	59	104.54			
	21-25	115	100.63	1.949	3	0.583
	26-30	22	86.20			
	30 and above	4	115.88			

*p≤ 0.05

An examination of the Table 5, related to the comparison of SCAS subscales scores according to the age of the participants, by using Kruskal Wallis H- test, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the mean ranks of the age of the participants between interpersonal communication (x^2=2.683, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=5.025, p>0.05), ecological adaptation (x^2=5.415, p>0.05), and language proficiency (x^2=1.949, p>0.05). There is statistically significant difference in the mean ranks of the age of the participants on academic and work performance (x^2 =11.637, p<0.05). A multiple comparison performed by Mann Whitney U test indicated that the participants aged between 21-25 years have higher scores of academic and work performance (u=2727, p<0.05) than participants aged 20 years and below. Further, participants who are 26-30 years old have higher scores of academic and work performance (u=351, p<0.05) than participants aged 20 years and younger.

Table 6.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of the ZSDS subscales according to length of stay of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Length of stay	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Core depressive factor	1st year	61	106.37			
	2nd year	86	103.23			
	3rd year	40	92.89	3.434	3	0.329
	4+ years	13	78.35			
Cognitive factor	1st year	61	104.78			
	2nd year	86	101.99			
	3rd year	40	95.49	1.529	3	0.676
	4+ years	13	86.00			
Anxiety factor	1st year	61	98.69			
	2nd year	86	104.30			
	3rd year	40	95.34	0.764	3	0.858
	4+ years	13	99.73			
Somatic factor	1st year	61	113.37			
	2nd year	86	95.40			
	3rd year	40	91.50	4.746	3	0.191
	4+ years	13	101.54			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 6 related to Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales scores according to length of stay of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=3.438, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=1.529, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=0.764, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=4.746, p>0.05).

Table 7.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of scores of SCAS according to participants length of stay.

SCAS Subscale	Length of stay	N	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Interpersonal communication	1st year	61	94.54			
	2nd year	86	94.23			
	3rd year	40	108.68	10.105	3	0.018*
	4+ years	13	144.77			
Academic and work performance	1st year	61	94.25			
	2nd year	86	96.01			
	3rd year	40	110.96	5.372	3	0.146
	4+ years	13	127.35			
Personal interests and community involvement	1st year	61	96.11			
	2nd year	86	101.02			
	3rd year	40	98.01	2.903	3	0.407
	4+ years	13	125.31			
Ecological adaptation	1st year	61	88.82			
	2nd year	86	94.55			
	3rd year	40	121.06	12.276	3	0.006*
	4+ years	13	131.38			
Language proficiency	1st year	61	96.33			
	2nd year	86	93.51			
	3rd year	40	113.91	6.171	3	0.104
	4+ years	13	125.04			

*p≤ 0.05

The Table 7 related to the results of the comparison of SCAS subscale scores according to the length of stay of the participants by using the Kruskal Wallis H-test, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups in academic and work performance (x^2=5.372, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=2.903, p>0.05) and language proficiency (x^2=6.171, p>0.05). However, the Kruskal Wallis H-test results shows that there are statistically significant differences among the groups between interpersonal communication (x^2=10.105, p=0.018) and ecological adaptation (x^2=12.276, p=0.006).

A multiple comparison performed by Mann Whitney U test indicated that participants with 4 and more years of stay in TRNC have more scores on the interpersonal communication subscale (u=160.00, p=0.038) than participants with 3 years of stay; more scores over participants with 2 years of stay (u=277.00, p=0.003), and those with only 1 year of stay (u=203.00, p=0.006). Participants with 4 and more years have more scores on ecological adaptation (u=339.500, p=0.022) than participants with 2 years, and those with only a year (u=240.00, p=0.025). Participants with 3 years of stay have higher scores on ecological adaptation subscale than those with 2 years of stay (u=1271.500, p=0.018), and those with only a year of stay (u=820.500, p=0.005).

Table 8

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the nationality of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Nationality	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Core depressive factor	Zimbabwe	98	87.94			
	Turkey	19	127.97			
	Rest of Africa	58	113.04	12.329	4	0.015*
	Arab countries	23	97.04			
	Other	02	130.75			
Cognitive factor	Zimbabwe	98	97.95			
	Turkey	19	105.45			
	Rest of Africa	58	103.47	0.504	4	0.973
	Arab countries	23	100.20			
	Other	02	95.75			
Anxiety factor	Zimbabwe	98	91.20			
	Turkey	19	120.11			
	Rest of Africa	58	109.84	6.326	4	0.176
	Arab countries	23	100.46			
	Other	02	99.25			
Somatic factor	Zimbabwe	98	89.90			
	Turkey	19	121.42			
	Rest of Africa	58	105.52	9.632	4	0.047*
	Arab countries	23	119.07			
	Other	02	62.25			

*p≤ 0.05

The table 8 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores of the participants according to their nationality, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between cognitive factor (x^2=0.504, p>0.05) and anxiety factor (x^2=6.326, p>0.05). There are statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=12.329, p=0.015) and somatic factor (x^2=9.632, p=0.047). A multiple comparison by using the Mann Whitney U-test reveals that participants from Arab countries scored high on the somatic factor subscale (u=808.00, p=0.033) than participants from Zimbabwe. Participants coming from the rest of Africa have more scores on the core depressive factor subscale (u=2127.00, p=0.009) when compared to Zimbabwean participants. Participants from Turkey scored higher than those from Zimbabwe on core depressive factor subscale (u=560.500, p=0.006) and somatic factor subscale (u=635.500, p=0.027) respectively.

Table 9.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of SCAS subscales scores according to nationality of the participants

	Nationality	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Interpersonal communication	Zimbabwe	98	109.47			
	Turkey	19	100.18			
	Rest of Africa	58	86.95	5.773	4	0.217
	Arab countries	23	98.17			
	Other	02	83.50			
Academic and Work performance	Zimbabwe	98	114.30			
	Turkey	19	91.32			
	Rest of Africa	58	83.78	11.954	4	0.018*
	Arab countries	23	89.85			
	Other	02	119.00			
Personal interests and community involvement	Zimbabwe	98	103.49			
	Turkey	19	100.03			
	Rest of Africa	58	94.17	3.265	4	0.515
	Arab countries	23	108.80			
	Other	02	46.50			
Ecological adaptation	Zimbabwe	98	110.64			
	Turkey	19	97.61			
	Rest of Africa	58	89.46	6.543	4	0.162
	Arab countries	23	86.89			
	Other	02	107.75			
Language proficiency	Zimbabwe	98	92.69			
	Turkey	19	153.05			
	Rest of Africa	58	92.24	21.149	4	0.000*
	Arab countries	23	114.37			
	Other	02	63.75			

*p≤ 0.05

The Table 9 related to the comparison of mean scores of SCAS subscales according to nationality of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between subscales of interpersonal communication (x^2=5.773, p<0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=3.265, p<0.05), and ecological adaptation (x^2=6.543, p<0.05). The results show that there are statistically significant differences among the groups between subscales of academic and work performance ([x2] 11.954, p=0.018) and language proficiency (x^2=21.149, p=0.000).

Further multiple comparison of the results by Mann Whitney U-test showed that participants from Turkey have high scores in language proficiency scale than participants from Zimbabwe (u=404.500, p=0.000), rest of Africa (u=194.00, p=0.000), Arab countries (u=120.500, p=0.012) and other countries (u=2.000, p=0.038). The results also reveal that participants from Zimbabwe have more academic and work performance scores than participants from the rest of Africa (u=1994.500, p=0.002).

Table 10.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the socioeconomic status of the participants.

ZSDS Subscales	SES	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Core depressive factor	Low	10	104.10			
	Medium	160	103.45	3.043	2	0.218
	High	30	83.57			
Cognitive factor	Low	10	97.60			
	Medium	160	104.40	4.331	2	0.115
	High	30	80.68			
Anxiety factor	Low	10	97.20			
	Medium	160	100.25	0.090	2	0.956
	High	30	102.93			
Somatic factor	Low	10	92.75			
	Medium	160	101.81	0.441	2	0.802
	High	30	96.12			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 10 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the socioeconomic status of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=3.043, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=4.331, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=0.090, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=0.441, p>0.05).

Table 11.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of the mean scores of SCAS subscales according to the socioeconomic status of the participants.

SCAS subscale	SES	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Interpersonal communication	Low	10	96.55			
	Medium	160	101.05	0.085	2	0.958
	High	30	98.87			
Academic and Work performance	Low	10	94.70			
	Medium	160	101.83	0.427	2	0.808
	High	30	95.33			
Personal interests and community involvement	Low	10	106.85			
	Medium	160	98.94	0.600	2	0.741
	High	30	106.72			
Ecological adaptation	Low	10	80.40			
	Medium	160	99.78	2.245	2	0.325
	High	30	111.02			
Language proficiency	Low	10	84.70			
	Medium	160	97.64	4.999	2	0.082
	High	30	121.02			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 11 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of SCAS subscale mean scores according to socioeconomic status of the participants, reveals that there no statistically significant differences among the groups between interpersonal communication(x^2=0.085, p>0.05), academic and work performance (x^2=0.427, p<0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=0.600, p<0.05), ecological adaptation (x^2=2.245, p<0.05), and language proficiency (x^2=4.999, p<0.05).

Table 12.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to accommodation type of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Accommodation type	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Core depressive factor	Living alone	43	111.86			
	Living with friend(s)	124	98.08	2.209	2	0.331
	Living with family	33	94.80			
Cognitive factor	Living alone	43	100.74			
	Living with friend(s)	124	103.57	1.758	2	0.415
	Living with family	33	88.65			
Anxiety factor	Living alone	43	114.17			
	Living with friend(s)	124	95.60	3.346	2	0.188
	Living with family	33	101.08			
Somatic factor	Living alone	43	100.47			
	Living with friend(s)	124	100.06	0.037	2	0.982
	Living with family	33	102.21			

p$\geq$ 0.05

The Table 12 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to participants' type of accommodation, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=2.209, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=1.758, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=3.346, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=0.037, p>0.05).

Table 13.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of mean scores of SCAS subscales according to accommodation type of the participants.

SCAS subscale	Accommodation Type	n	Mean rank	x^2	df	p
Interpersonal communication	Living alone	43	87.30			
	Living with friend(s)	124	104.53	2.892	2	0.235
	Living with family	33	102.55			
Academic and Work performance	Living alone	43	87.65			
	Living with friend(s)	124	105.59	3.156	2	0.206
	Living with family	33	98.12			
Personal interests and community involvement	Living alone	43	96.14			
	Living with friend(s)	124	100.42	0.613	2	0.736
	Living with family	33	106.47			
Ecological adaptation	Living alone	43	92.77			
	Living with friend(s)	124	103.53	1.137	2	0.566
	Living with family	33	99.18			
Language proficiency	Living alone	43	100.79			
	Living with friend(s)	124	96.78	2.377	2	0.305
	Living with family	33	114.09			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 13 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of SCAS subscale mean scores according to the type of accommodation of participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between subscales of interpersonal communication (x^2=2.892, p>0.05), academic and work performance (x^2=3.156, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=0.613, p>0.05), ecological adaptation (x^2=1.137, p>0.05), and language proficiency (x^2=2.377, p>0.05).

Table 14.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the current financial status of participants.

ZSDS subscales	Financial status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Core depressive factor	Income is enough	88	100.51	1.843	2	0.398
	Income hardly enough	50	108.73			
	Besides income I work	62	93.85			
Cognitive factor	Income is enough	88	92.59	4.168	2	0.124
	Income hardly enough	50	113.30			
	Besides income I work	62	101.41			
Anxiety factor	Income is enough	88	105.57	2.371	2	0.306
	Income hardly enough	50	102.97			
	Besides income I work	62	91.31			
Somatic factor	Income is enough	88	103.98	0.630	2	0.730
	Income hardly enough	50	99.11			
	Besides income I work	62	96.68			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 14 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales scores according to the current financial status of the participants, shows that there no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=1.843, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=4.168, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=2.371, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=0.630, p>0.05).

Table 15.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison SCAS subscales score according to the financial status of the participants.

SCAS subscale	Financial status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Interpersonal communication	Income is enough	88	97.80			
	Income hardly enough	50	98.71			
	Besides income I work	62	105.77	0.757	2	0.685
Academic and Work performance	Income is enough	88	92.27			
	Income hardly enough	50	105.32			
	Besides income I work	62	108.29	3.272	2	0.195
Personal interests and community involvement	Income is enough	88	97.36			
	Income hardly enough	50	98.63			
	Besides income I work	62	106.47	1.000	2	0.607
Ecological adaptation	Income is enough	88	102.40			
	Income hardly enough	50	90.89			
	Besides income I work	62	105.56	1.968	2	0.374
Language proficiency	Income is enough	88	100.19			
	Income hardly enough	50	88.18			
	Besides income I work	62	110.88	4.343	2	0.114

p≥ 0.05

The Table 15 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of SCAS subscales scores according to participants' financial status, shows that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between interpersonal communication (x^2=0.757, p>0.05), academic and work performance (x^2=3.272, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=1.000, p>0.05), ecological adaptation (x^2=1.968, p<0.05), and language proficiency scales (x^2=4.343, p>0.05).

Table 16.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscales scores according to marital status of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Marital status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Core depressive factor	Single	181	99.58			
	Married	09	102.89	0.693	2	0.707
	Other	10	115.00			
Cognitive factor	Single	181	99.79			
	Married	09	100.61	0.516	2	0.773
	Other	10	113.20			
Anxiety factor	Single	181	99.43			
	Married	09	91.94	2.475	2	0.293
	Other	10	127.50			
Somatic factor	Single	181	100.19			
	Married	09	84.17	2.003	2	0.367
	Other	10	120.90			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 16 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to the marital status of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=0.693, p>0.05), cognitive factor(x^2=0.516, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=2.475, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=2.003, p>0.05).

Table 17.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of SCAS subscale scores according to marital status of the participants.

SCAS subscale	Marital status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Interpersonal communication	Single	181	100.40			
	Married	09	96.56	0.128	2	0.938
	Other	10	105.85			
Academic and Work performance	Single	181	102.76			
	Married	09	93.94	4.078	2	0.138
	Other	10	65.50			
Personal interests and community involvement	Single	181	100.18			
	Married	09	95.72	0.382	2	0.826
	Other	10	110.60			
Ecological adaptation	Single	181	103.27			
	Married	09	97.44	7.195	2	0.027*
	Other	10	53.20			
Language proficiency	Single	181	98.39			
	Married	09	124.78	2.666	2	0.264
	Other	10	116.80			

*p≤ 0.05

The Table 17 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of SCAS subscales scores according to the marital status of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between interpersonal communication (x^2=0.128, p>0.05), academic and work performance (x^2=4.078, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=0.382, p>0.05), and language proficiency (x^2=2.666, p>0.05). The results show that there are statistically significant differences among the groups on the ecological adaptation subscale (x^2=7.195, p=0.027).

A multiple comparison by using Mann Whitney U-test shows that single participants scored higher on the ecological adaptation subscale when compared to participations from the Other group (u=451.500, p=0.007).

Table 18.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of ZSDS subscale mean scores according to employment status of the participants.

ZSDS subscales	Employment status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	df	p
Core depressive factor	Full time	13	77.19			
	Part time	50	99.62	2.398	2	0.301
	Not working	137	103.03			
Cognitive factor	Full time	13	73.58			
	Part time	50	106.01	3.327	2	0.189
	Not working	137	101.04			
Anxiety factor	Full time	13	104.73			
	Part time	50	98.32	0.149	2	0.928
	Not working	137	100.89			
Somatic factor	Full time	13	96.50			
	Part time	50	96.12	0.518	2	0.772
	Not working	137	102.48			

p$\geq$ 0.05

The Table 18 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of ZSDS subscales mean scores according to employment status of the participants, shows that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between core depressive factor (x^2=2.398, p>0.05), cognitive factor (x^2=3.327, p>0.05), anxiety factor (x^2=0.149, p>0.05), and somatic factor (x^2=0.518, p>0.05).

Table 19.

The Kruskal Wallis H-test results related to the comparison of SCAS subscales scores according to employment status of the participants.

SCAS Subscales	Employment status	n	Mean Rank	x^2	Df	p
Interpersonal communication	Full time	13	103.92			
	Part time	50	109.24	1.699	2	0.428
	Not working	137	96.99			
Academic and Work performance	Full time	13	105.38			
	Part time	50	106.25	0.861	2	0.650
	Not working	137	97.94			
Personal interests and community involvement	Full time	13	119.04			
	Part time	50	102.63	1.714	2	0.424
	Not working	137	97.96			
Ecological adaptation	Full time	13	87.88			
	Part time	50	112.18	3.072	2	0.215
	Not working	137	97.43			
Language proficiency	Full time	13	116.00			
	Part time	50	112.08	4.342	2	0.114
	Not working	137	94.80			

p≥ 0.05

The Table 19 related to the Kruskal Wallis H-test results of the comparison of the SCAS subscale scores according to employment status of the participants, reveals that there are no statistically significant differences among the groups between interpersonal communication (x^2=1.699, p>0.05), academic and work performance (x^2=0.861, p>0.05), personal interests and community involvement (x^2=1.714, p>0.05), ecological adaptation (x^2=3.072, p>0.05), and language proficiency (x^2=4.342, p>0.05).

Table 20.

The Pearson correlation coefficients between SCAS and ZSDS mean total scores.

Scales	r	P
SCAS	-0.324	0.000**
ZSDS		

**p≤ 0.01

The Table 20 related to the pearson correlation coefficients of the relationship between the total mean scores of SCAS and ZSDS scales shows that there is a moderate but statistically significant negative correlation between the two sets of scores (r = -0.324, p = 0.000).

V.   DISCUSSION

The present research study investigated international university students according to levels of depression they might experience as a result of their sociocultural adjustment to living and studying in North Cyprus. Socio-demographic factors were taken into consideration as predictive variables to measure the degree of success of sociocultural adjustment among these students. The research sought to answer two research questions: What are the socio-demographic factors that affect sociocultural adaptation? How does the level of depression experienced by international students affect sociocultural adjustment?

Results of the present study found the gender variable as a significant predictor of the level of psychological distress among international university students. There were statistically significant differences between the groups. Female students in this study scored higher on the core depressive factor and cognitive factor subscales of the ZSDS. The present research study findings are in concordance with results gathered by Ozer (2015) where gender was found to be a predictive variable to the level of perceived stress on the sociocultural adjustment of international students. These results suggest that female students were more likely to be depressed when compared to their male counterparts (Kendler, et.al, 2001; Cryanowski, et. al, 2000), thus making adjustment to the foreign environment more challenging for females than males. The study also shows that gender was not a significant variable in predicting sociocultural adjustment when it was compared to SCAS subscales. This discrepancy in the findings on depression scale might be due to the effects of other variables.

Results from the present study revealed no significant differences when age was compared to depression subscale mean scores. It shows that age as a demographic characteristic was not significant in predicting the levels of depression experienced by the international university students in North Cyprus. These findings however, contradict the results obtained by Ozer (2015), who observed that the age variable contributed uniquely to the variance of depression and anxiety when older students were more likely to be depressed. The difference in the research outcomes can be attributed to the samples used in either case studies. Ozer (2015) compared international students' sociocultural adjustment on a number of variables with the local Danish students. A different result might have been ascertained if international students have been investigated amongst themselves. It would have been

expected that younger students experienced more depressive symptoms than older students when we look at the pressures of leaving one's country and family and starting a new life where you will be living alone surmounted by feelings of loneliness and homesickness (Spencer- Oatey and Xiong, 2006).

However, age was found to be a significant predictive variable of sociocultural adjustment in the SCAS subscales. Notably, significant differences were found in the academic and work performance subscale. Results shows that older students were more likely to report less adjustment problems that the young students, hence the older the student becomes the easier they are able to handle multiple tasks and responsibilities (i.e. academic and work). Most students who reported working either part time or full time were aged 21 years and over. These results fail to match Yu. B (2010) study report where age of arrival and social contact were found to have a non-significant correlation to indices of sociocultural adaptation. One reason for this outcome is that the majority of students doing both academic and work responsibilities are postgraduate students thus they are in a better position to multi task.

The number of years the students have resided or spent in North Cyprus has been found to be a significant predictor of sociocultural adjustment. The results show adjustment success improves with the number of years, for instance students who have stayed in North Cyprus for 4 years and over reported fewer adjustment difficulties than those with only two years or less. Similar research findings were reported by Kuo and Roysircar (2004) who found that time of arrival and length of residence by international students were important predictors in the adaptation of Chinese Adolescents studying in Canada. Ying (2005) also reported that students experienced fewer sociocultural difficulties 6 weeks after arrival than 3 weeks after arrival. Students with four and more years in North Cyprus showed greater sociocultural competence in interpersonal communication and ecological adaptation. This shows that the longer the student stays in a foreign country, the better they become accustomed to the way of life and social customs, values and norms, (e.g. language proficiency) and the environment around them (e.g. directions, and common places to hang out).

No significant differences were found among the groups formed due to length according to depression subscales despite reports from previous studies regarding length of stay as the most important predictor of adjustment (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). It was found that length of stay was not a significant predictor of level of depression experienced by

international students. Spencer- Oatey & Xiong (2006), and Sumer, Poyrazli & Grahame (2008) also share the same research findings. Lack of differences among the groups might be as a result of other confounding variables effecting the variance in the level of depression. For example, social support through friendships with both local nationals and other international students could have a buffering effect on psychological distress (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Assuming that language proficiency in the host language is obtained after a certain number of years in a foreign country, it is tentative to conclude that language proficiency is only a significant factor in predicting sociocultural than psychological adjustment (Ozer, 2015). A reason for this could be that factors that pose as psychological stressors to some students are not directly associated with sociocultural adjustment challenges experienced with others.

The study investigated students from 22 countries and these were later grouped by region of origin and in some cases variance in the total number of participants. The results of this study found statistically significant differences among the groups in relation to both depression and sociocultural adaptation subscales. It was found that nationality of the participants was a significant predictor of the level of depression especially in the core depressive factor and somatic factor subscales. Students from Arab countries who took part in this study were more distressed and reported more somatic symptoms than students from Zimbabwe. Also students from Turkey and the rest of Africa were more likely to be depressed than their Zimbabwean counterparts. This study's findings are contrary to the results found by Ozer (2015) regarding predictors of sociocultural adaptation of international students in Denmark. The results showed that students who reported low cultural distance and more oriented towards the Danish culture, had fewer adjustment problems.

Results from the present study suggest otherwise because students from Turkey and Arab countries reported high levels of depressive symptoms despite the fact that both groups share a number of common cultural values with the host country. It would have been expected that students from the two subgroups report lower levels of psychological distress than students from other regions for example Africa.

Results also show significant differences among groups in the academic and work performance, and language proficiency subscales. Students from Zimbabwe were more likely to experience less sociocultural adjustment problems than students from other nationalities in as far as academic and work performance is concerned. Students from Turkey reported

higher competence in the language proficiency subscale than any other nationality something which is not surprising since they share a great deal of cultural similarities with the host nationals especially language. As postulated by Poyrazli, et al. (2003), international students who are proficient in the host language experience fewer adjustment problems when they study abroad. These results explain the fact that while Turkish students are well adjusted culturally in terms of language, they still experience academic and work performance challenges. Hence adjustment is seen in two ways i.e. cultural and academic adjustment. Zimbabwean students on the other hand lack language proficiency as an adjustment tool, yet they possess good academic and work performance tools. One reason could be that students from Zimbabwe or other countries may be too concerned with academic success to concentrate on other factors of adjustment such as learning the host language. To them having academic success is enough to make them feel good.

When students' depression subscale scores were compared to their marital status, no significant differences were observed meaning that the occurrence of depressive symptoms did not differ much on whether one was married or not married. This shows that apart from marital status depression levels were controlled by other variables such as age or gender of the participants. However, a number of previous research studies examining factors affecting sociocultural adjustment among international students, have reported little concerning marital status except when variable change was investigated on level of social support, for example, if someone was enjoying the company of others or not (Sumer, Poyrazli & Grahame, 2008).

Further results from the present study found marital status to be a significant predictor of ecological adaptation of international students. Single students were found to be having fewer ecological adaptation difficulties than students who were married or living with their children. Constant social contact with host nationals has been seen as a good way to quickly adjust to the new environment (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Li & Gaser, 2005). If family responsibility is a factor that is to be considered then the results from the study are justified. The married couples spend most of their time at home fulfilling roles and duties of marriage life, they hardly get time to explore their environment unless if they are to do that together, something which will require outgoing couples with great shared interests in hobbies. For single students, however, the situation is different. They enjoy a lot, always moving about, travel and reach as many contacts as possible especially if they plan on getting potential suitor attention and admiration. So it is possible that single students who travel a lot, for

different reasons, are better ecologically adjusted than married students who are always at home with their partners.

The results showed a moderately significant negative correlation between SCAS mean scores and ZSDS mean scores. The ZSDS was used to measure the level of depressive symptoms among students, while SCAS was measuring sociocultural adaptation. This study found a negative correlation which means that an increase in one variable leads to a decrease in another or vice-versa. So in this case high SCAS scale scores were correlated to a low ZSDS scale scores. This finding suggests low levels of depression were associated with better or positive sociocultural adjustment among international university students. The present study results compliment research findings by Yu (2010), who found that sociocultural and educational adaptation could be enhanced through low levels of depression and anxiety.

Furthermore, results from this study suggest that there were no significant differences among the groups when socioeconomic status and nature of employment of students were compared to both psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment. A chi-square comparison of SES and current employment status of international students revealed that there were no significant differences among the groups. Khawaja and Dempsey (2008), noted that a high level of SES and international students' scholarships can act as a neutralising effect to possible stressors. This is true for the results from the present study as a majority of international students reported high to medium SES and some have scholarships. So SES cannot be a predictor of either poor adjustment or better adjustment, but some other variables.

The present study investigated social interaction and support through the nature of accommodation the international students had. Results from the present study found no significant differences among the different accommodation type groups according to the depression and sociocultural adaptation subscales. These results however, contradicts previous research findings on the effects of social support of international students on sociocultural adjustment (Ozer, 2015; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Results from previous studies for instance, suggests that contact with host nationals predicted more successful sociocultural adjustment (Swami, 2009). In other sociocultural studies, social support and perceived discrimination were significant predictors of both psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Over half of the students who took part in the study reported living with one or more friends, hence it would be expected that the

level of social support being experienced would significantly affect variance in the adjustment process.

Possible explanation for this discrepancy in research findings is that, international students in this study who lived with a friend did so with their home or regional friends not with host nationals. Thus, the level of social support and interaction they acquired was insufficient to cause variance in sociocultural adjustment especially in predicting language proficiency. If that is the case, therefore, living with friends or living alone did not help much or cause a lot of difference among the adjustment of international students from this study.

5.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The present research findings revealed some significant differences among the international students groups in relation to their sociocultural adjustment to studying abroad. Notably, gender, age, length of stay, marital status and nationality of international students were found to be significant predictors of sociocultural adjustment. This answered one of the research question of the study which sought to investigate the various demographic factors that affects sociocultural adjustment of international university students. For instance, the number of years students stayed in North Cyprus was closely related to sociocultural adjustment. Female students reported higher levels of psychological distress, while single students were more ecologically adapted than married ones.

The levels of distress among the international students was significantly correlated to sociocultural adjustment. A significant negative correlation was found which suggests that low levels of depressive symptoms experienced by students enabled adjustment success. The results answers the research question. The study found type of accommodation, socioeconomic status and employment status to be non-significant predictors of sociocultural adjustment.

From the results gathered from the present study, it is recommended that the host institution could come up with curriculum or programmes aimed at providing cultural competence of international students in the classrooms. Further research studies on international student adjustment could utilise larger sample size, random sampling strategies so that results obtaining thereof will be representative enough and be generalized to the

general international student population. Also longitudinal studies could be used to investigate factors affecting sociocultural adjustment of international students as these offer a clear trajectory of the variables at play, and a better understanding of the subject.

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Appendix

Dear Participant.

The Questionnaire below has been prepared as part of a MSc General Psychology research study on the factors affecting the psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of foreign international university students in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics in TRNC. Please choose the most appropriate and honest answer for each question. Your name is not required on this form. The information that you submit will be kept private and confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. Data results will be reported only in group averages. You reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any moment if you feel no need to proceed, however, your co-operation is sincerely appreciated. My name is Herrick Chiwara T and I thank you for your time and participation in this study.

A. **SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (please circle the most appropriate response.)**

1. What is your age, please write

   _____

2. What is your gender?
   a. Female
   b. Male

3. Where are you from? Please mention the name of your country:

   _____

4. What is your department, please mention:

   _____

5. What is your marital status?
   a. Single
   b. Married
   c. Separated
   d. Divorced
   e. Others (please specify……………...)

6. Which type of program are you registered?
   a. Undergraduate
   b. Graduate-master
   c. Graduate-PhD

7. How long have you been in Cyprus?
   a. First year
   b. Second year

    c. Third year
    d. Fourth year
    e. Fifth or more

8. What is the education level of your mother?
    a. Illiterate
    b. Primary
    c. Secondary
    d. University

9. What is the education level of your father?
    a. Illiterate
    b. Primary
    c. Secondary
    d. University

10. How do you perceive socio-economic level of your family?
    a. Low
    b. Medium
    c. High

11. Which statement is true for you?
    a. My income (scholarship or pocket money) easily answers my needs
    b. My income hardly answers my needs
    c. Besides my income, I have to work myself

12. Do you have any siblings?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. With whom do you live during the school year?
    a. No one, I live alone
    b. One or more friends
    c. My spouse or partner
    d. My child or children
    e. My parents
    f. Other relatives

14. Specify your current work situation
    a. Full time
    b. Part time
    c. Not working

Appendix 1

SECTION B: ZUNG SELF-RATING DEPRESSION SCALE

Please read each statement and decide how much of the time the statement describes how you have been feeling during the past several days.

Tick in the appropriate column.	A little of the time	Some of the time	Good part of the time	Most of the time
1.I feel down-hearted and blue				
2.Morning is when I feel the best				
3.I have crying spells or I feel like it				
4.I have trouble sleeping at night				
5.I eat as much as I used to				
6.I still enjoy sex				
7.I notice that I am losing weight				
8.I have trouble with constipation				
9.My heart beats faster than usual				
10.I get tired for no reason				
11. My mind is as clear as it used to be				
12.I find it easy to do the things I used to				
13.I am restless and can't keep still				
14.I feel hopeful about the future				
15.I am more irritable than usual				
16.I find it easy to make decisions				
17.I feel that I am useful and needed				
18. My life is pretty full				
19.I feel that others would be better off if I were dead				
20.I still enjoy the things I used to do				

Appendix 2

SECTION C: SOCIOCULTURAL ADAPTATION SCALE

Living in a different culture often involves learning new skills and behaviours. Thinking about life in North Cyprus, please rate your competence at each the following behaviours (1 = Not at all competent; 5 = Extremely competent).

	1 Not at all Competent				5 Extremely Competent
1. Building and maintaining relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Managing my academic/work responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Interacting at social events.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Maintaining my hobbies and interests.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Adapting to the noise level in my neighbourhood.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's gestures and facial expressions.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Working effectively with other students/work colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Obtaining community services I require.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Adapting to the population density.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Understanding and speaking (**host language**)	1	2	3	4	5
11. Varying the rate of my speaking in a culturally appropriate manner.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Gaining feedback from other students/work colleagues to help improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Accurately interpreting and responding to other people's emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Attending or participating in community activities	1	2	3	4	5
15. Finding my way around	1	2	3	4	5
16. Interacting with members of the opposite sex.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Expressing my ideas to other students/work colleagues in a culturally appropriate manner.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Dealing with the bureaucracy.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Adapting to the pace of life.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Reading and writing (**host language**)	1	2	3	4	5
21. Changing my behaviour to suit social norms, rules, attitudes, beliefs, and customs.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix 3

CURRICULUM VITAE

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Name and Surname	:	Herrick Tatenda Chiwara
Date of Birth	:	01 May 1990
Sex	:	Male
Nationality	:	Zimbabwean
Marital Status	:	Single
Home Address	:	3 Meredith Drive
		Eastlea, Harare
Email	:	**hevi.dada@gmail.com**

2. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

2018

M.Sc. General Psychology

Near East University, North Cyprus

2015

B.Sc. Hons. Psychology

University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe

2014

- Executive Certificate in Project Management

- Executive Certificate in Programme and Project Monitoring and Evaluation.

University of Zimbabwe

2008

Advanced Level

Murewa High School. Murewa, Zimbabwe

2006

Ordinary Level

Murewa High School. Murewa, Zimbabwe

3. WORK EXPERIENCE

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe.

Nyamashato Secondary School, Murewa.

Teacher (2yrs: Feb 2009-Dec 2011)

4. OTHER SKILLS & COMPETENCIES

- Computer literacy (Ms Word, Excel, Power-point, Internet)

- Conduct and report on research projects and implement findings in policy and practice

- Good verbal and written communication skills.

- Problem solving and conflict resolution.

- Promotion of primary psychosocial well-being

- Good and able team builder and mobiliser.

5. RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

5.1 An investigation into the psychological and behavioural experiences of circumcised men in Zimbabwe: A case of Murewa District. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the B.Sc. Hons. Degree of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of Zimbabwe.

5.2 A second Home: An investigation of the factors affecting sociocultural adjustment of foreign international university students. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the M.Sc. Degree of General Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Near East University.
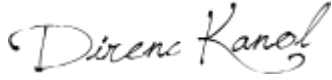
Appendix 4

20.11.2017

Sayın Prof. Dr. Ebru Çakıcı,

Bilimsel Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu'na yapmış olduğunuz YDÜ/SB/2017/66 proje numaralı ve **"A Second Home: An İnvestigation Of The Relationship Between Sociocultural Adaptation, Depression Level And Demographic Factors Among İnternational University Students"** başlıklı proje önerisi kurulumuzca değerlendirilmiş olup, etik olarak uygun bulunmuştur. Bu yazı ile birlikte, başvuru formunuzda belirttiğiniz bilgilerin dışına çıkmamak suretiyle araştırmaya başlayabilirsiniz.

Yardımcı Doçent Doktor Direnç Kanol

Bilimsel Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu Raportörü

Not: Eğer bir kuruma resmi bir kabul yazısı sunmak istiyorsanız, Yakın Doğu Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırmalar Etik Kurulu'na bu yazı ile başvurup, kurulun başkanının imzasını taşıyan resmi bir yazı temin edebilirsiniz.

A SECOND HOME: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING
SOCIOCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AMONG FOREIGN INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.

Herrick Chiwara

ORIGINALITY REPORT

13%	8%	9%	%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	Sumer, Seda Poyrazli, Senel Grahame, Kam. "Predictors of depression and anxiety among international students.(Research)(Report)", Journal of Counseling and Development, Fall 2008 Issue Publication	1%
2	cme.medicine.dal.ca Internet Source	1%
3	www.phmed.umu.se Internet Source	1%
4	digitalcommons.wku.edu Internet Source	1%
5	Ozer, Simon. "Predictors of international students' psychological and sociocultural adjustment to the context of reception while studying at Aarhus University, Denmark", Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 2015. Publication	1%
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