



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM DIFFERENT CONTINENTS FACE VARIED CHALLENGES AND SEEK CAMPUS SUPPORT IN DISSIMILAR WAYS

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ABSTRACT

Many studies have examined the challenges faced by international students from a global perspective. This study separates international students into four continents (African, Asian, European, and North American) and explores their challenges, such as English proficiency, financial needs, cultural shock, and technological experiences, and how these students seek help from campus resources such as the international, writing, students' success, and counseling centers. Also this study examines how these support systems influence international students' academic performances. The study surveyed 344 participants, and ANOVA result indicated that international students who received social support from campus resources experienced positive effects in their academic performance. Analysis revealed that of the different categories of international students, Asian international students felt most deficient in the English language, as such, they visited the writing and student success centers the most. European international students visited the counseling center the most, when compared to other international students. In general, African international students suffered the most, however, they felt most successful in their academics.

Keywords: International Students, Social Support, Cultural Shock, English Proficiency, Academic Success, Campus Resources.

Introduction

The mobility of international students has been on the rise, with a total of 886,052 students in the United States (U.S.), which indicates a 40% increase compared to the decade before (Open Doors, 2014). And the U.S. has been a worldwide leader in educating students from other countries around the world (Banjong & Olson, 2016). The U.S., accommodate most of the world's 4.5 million mobile college and university students worldwide (Open Doors, 2014). Open Doors states that not only did the number of international students in the U.S. almost double the number hosted by the United Kingdom, it also increased by eight percent compared to the previous year. The bulk of international students who come into the U.S. have had significant effects on the country. For example, international students contributed 27 billion dollars to the U.S. economy, and 65% of this contribution came from personal and family funds (Open Doors, 2014). International students also contribute to cultural diversity (Andrade, 2006), and also, to a global network with other countries.

This bulk of international students who study in the U.S. have a goal of returning to their countries to hold high positions that will give them money and prestige (Szelenyi and Rhoads, 2007). Even though international students come in to the U.S. with such high dreams, they hardly foresee the challenges they might encounter as they adjust to their new surroundings (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Earlier research has issued a portfolio of literature on the challenges faced by international students and their ability to remain resilient (Faleel et al., 2012; Kuo, 2011; Lee, 2010; Tucker & Ang, 2007). Studies have also highlighted the support that these students receive from their universities to handle such challenges in order to improve on their academic performance (Banjong, 2015; Mori, 2000; Quintrell & Westwood, 1994).

Studies have shown that international students experience cultural shock and stress at the very beginning of their stay in the U.S. (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Lin, 2006; McLachlan & Justice, 2009; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Studies have also shown that lack of English proficiency (Zhai, 2002), and financial difficulties have negative effects on international students' academic performance (Banjong, 2015; Kilinc & Granello, 2003) as they integrate into the U.S. educational system. Such difficulties may also limit these students' understandings of the U.S. culture (Glass, Kocielek, Wongtrirat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015). Social support has been one of the most effective components of determining international students' psychological well-being (Lee, Koeske, & Sales, 2004; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003), and academic performance (Banjong, 2015).

Although all these studies have shown the challenges that international students face, and how they seek help to improve their academic performance and well-being in the U.S., few of these studies have combined the challenges of international students and the support these students receive (Banjong, 2015; Cho & Yu, 2015). However, even these studies are limited, in that they have not considered the effects of challenges and support on international students' academic performance based on their continents of origin.

This study looked at how international students from different continents manage challenges such as; cultural shock, financial

difficulties, lack of English proficiency and lack of technological experience by making use of on-campus resources, the international center, writing center, students' success center, and counseling centers, to improve on their academic performance. With appropriate institutional support, it becomes considerably easier for international students to achieve better academic performance (Cho & Yu, 2015). In this study, we hypothesized that international students from different continents face different challenges and seek support differently from campus services, and those who seek help from these services perform better.

Acculturation and Cultural Shock

According to Berry (1997, 2006) acculturation can be defined as the socio-cultural, psychological, and economic acclimatization that results from a change in one's environment. It is a dual process affecting the members of two or more cultural groups as each adapts to the presence of the other (Berry, 2006; Ward, 2007). Although acculturation by itself is not a negative experience, conflicts ensuing from this change can result in stressors that can affect a person negatively. Usually, these experiences are "judged to be problematic yet controllable and surmountable" (Berry 1997, p.19). Berry (1997) further explains that there are four ways one can encounter acculturation in surroundings that differ from their own. These are namely via assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Berry (1980) describes an additional concept, called deculturation. This refers to a person's inability to identify with either the original culture or host culture. Individuals faced with acculturative stressors can overcome or mitigate such stress if equipped with ample coping mechanisms to overcome those stressors (Berry, 1997; Nicklas, 2013). In the event that these coping strategies are not in place, the individual may experience higher distress levels resulting in anxiety and depression (Zhao et al. 2008; Faleel et al., 2012).

Regarding international students, Chapdelaine & Alexitch (2004) explain that many international students perceive a loss of cultural identity, which adversely impacts the quality of adjustment in their new environment. Researchers such as Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey (2005), Misra, Crist, & Burant (2003), and Lee (2010) state that international students suffer cultural shock as a direct result of the difficulties involved in adjusting to the new culture. According to Portela-Myers (2006) many international students initially suffer cultural shock on arrival into the United States due to feelings of uneasiness or anxiety in adjusting to the new culture. The shock happens when a person comes across some situations that they do not expect in the new environment. Many international students feel a medley of psychological distress including feelings of confusion, lack of self-identity, loss of social support, role expectations, and feelings of rejection or alienation (Torres, 2009; Constantine et al., 2005; Mori, 2000).

Financial Difficulties

The reasons international students come to the U.S. have changed over the years from diplomacy and intercultural exchange to globalism with underlying financial motivation (Lee & Rice, 2007). Studies have noted that institutions recruit international students as 'customers' and 'consumers' for financial gain (Habu, 2000; Lee & Rice, 2007; Levin, 2002; Rhee & Sagaria, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In some cases, after enrollment, the students often become dissatisfied (Lee & Rice, 2007), because they encounter some financial difficulties. Most of these international students pay higher tuition to their institutions, compared to domestic students (Fangfang, 2008), and this tuition benefits the institution, community, and nation at large (Lee & Rice, 2007). It should be noted that in 2013, international students contributed over \$27 billion to the U.S. economy in tuition and expenditures for living expenses, with students from Saudi Arabia paying the highest in tuition (Open Door, 2014).

Clearly, the financial advantages of international students to higher education institutions cannot be ignored. Even though international students contributed such a high amount of money, it is important to mention that in reality, international students still face many financial challenges while studying in the U.S. (Banjong, 2015; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). Banjong (2015) noted that financial difficulties poorly affected international students' academic performance. Even when these students bring money from their countries, the exchange rate could reduce the value below what it is worth in their country. Added to these challenges, international students do not qualify for financial aid while in the U.S. The U.S. Department of Education (2015) confirms that most foreign students are not eligible for federal aid from the U.S. Department of Education. Also, according to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for Employment (2015), international students are only eligible to work on campus for 20 hours per week. However, jobs are often difficult to find on campus in most cases, because international students have limited employment opportunities since some on campus jobs are only available to students on federal work-study programs (Fangfang, 2008).

Lack of English Proficiency as a factor that influences Academic Success

Yearly, the United States becomes more ethnically and linguistically diverse. In the 2013/2014 academic year, the United States admitted 886,052 international students as undergraduate and graduate students, which was eight percent higher than the previous year (Open doors, 2014).

These students come from all over the world where the English language might not be the first language. Even in places where English languages are taught and spoken, the version of English could be different from American academic English. Open Doors (2014) revealed that most of the international students came from China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia, where the English language is not the first language. As a result, these students would have to learn American academic English to attain success as they pursue their higher education.

The issue of English language proficiency entry levels into higher education institutions is controversial (Woodrow, 2006). There is an array of entry requirements between universities and disciplines. Due to this, students come into the U.S. at various levels of proficiency in academic English. American higher education institutions require a certain level of English proficiency for success in college (Andrade 2006), and studies have shown that it is difficult for international students' English language skills to be developed during their

initial years of study (Benzie, 2009; Carroll & Ryan 2007). Studies have shown that lack of English language proficiency has negative effects on the academic success of international students (Andrade, 2006; Benzie, 2010; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

English language proficiency has been identified as one of the major difficulties international students experience while adjusting to higher education institutions (Banjong, 2015; Shih & Brown, 2000) because the language and the method of teaching is different from what they are used to. The study conducted by Banjong (2015) showed that international students' lack of English proficiency had negative effects on the academic success of these students. Even though writing centers and student success centers are available on most campuses, there are some international students who are not comfortable visiting these centers (Kuo 2011). As such, their lack of proficiency in the English language affects their academic success negatively (Banjong, 2015; Gebhard, 2012; Shih & Brown, 2000; Zhai, 2002). Andrade (2006) proposed that universities must become more knowledgeable about the adjustment issues international students face and implement appropriate support services to provide assistance to improve their English proficiency.

Another challenge international students face is lack of technological skill, which negatively affects their academic performance (Banjong, 2015). Mehra and Bilal (2007) in their study found that international students had difficulties using technological skills as they used the search engines when searching for materials needed to complete their assignments. However, Zhao, Kuh, and Carini (2005) mentioned that international students are curious to learn about technology in their first year of college. This shows international students are curious to learn more about technology because of its accessibility when compared to their country of origin.

Social Support

Social support for international students promotes academic success and psychological well-being as they adjust to the U.S. culture (Lee & Ciftci, 2014; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Ying & Liese, 1991). Social support may come from various sources for example, students' immediate families, and other connections the students build while in the school. Oppedal (2006) believes that the family plays an important role in supporting the academic and psychological well-being of the students, which encourages cultural values, and promotes a sense of cohesiveness and belonging (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind & Vedder, 2001; Phinney & Ong, 2002). Lee and Ciftci (2014) found that after arriving in the U.S., international students need meaningful relationships with other students from their countries of origin (co-nationals), and a sense of belonging to their countries of origin as they can share information about living in the U.S., as well as other cultural material, such as food and clothing (Lou, 2014). These students also need American host friends to assist them to quickly adapt in their new social environment, because being in frequent contact with host students facilitates learning and practice of the host culture (Lee & Ciftci, 2014). When international students perceive support from their host friends and families, it provides them with a sense of safety and a social network for easier transition into the new cultural environment (Ying & Liese, 1991).

In sum, understanding international students' adjustment issues will have global implications in higher education. When higher education institutions are able to better understand the challenges of international students such as English language proficiency, financial needs, acculturation, and technological skills based on their continents of origin, they could better support such students in managing their challenges by making use of campus resources. When international students have knowledge and make use of these resources, they would have higher chances of improving their academic performance and resilience.

Purpose

International students from different continents face varied challenges as they pursue higher education. Many studies have looked at international students as a single body, however, these students come from different geographical environments and cultural backgrounds and, hence, face varied challenges and seek help in different ways. The main purpose of this study is to single out international students from different continents (African, Asian, European, and North American) and examine the challenges they face based on English proficiency, financial challenges, cultural shock, and technological experience, and how these students seek campus support from services such as international centers, writing centers, students' success centers and counseling centers to improve their academic performance.

Materials and Method

Participants

This study was carried out in a Midwestern university in the U.S. with a total international student population of 1077 (undergraduate students 694; graduate students 263). Of the total surveyed, 349 students responded to the survey questions, giving a response rate of 36.5%. Five students did not complete the survey, and henceforth were deleted from the analysis, leaving 344 usable responses. The respondents to this study equal 198 males and 146 females, and of these, 196 were graduates and 148 were undergraduates, with ages ranging from 18 to 46. The respondents were categorized into four different continents: Africa (89), Asia (172), Europe (38), and North America (45)

Instrument

The authors adopted the questionnaire *Scales for Challenges and Campus Resources* (Banjong, 2015). The questions on the questionnaire centered on the needs of international students and the challenges they face as they integrate into American culture. This survey included financial challenges, English proficiency, technology, and cultural shock. As proposed by Constantine et al. (2005), cultural shock could be broken down to include loneliness/homesickness, and as such, the authors of this present study framed questions of loneliness/homesickness under the umbrella terms of cultural shock. The survey also focused on institutional support centers available at the institution such as the international center, writing center, student success center, and counseling center. The dependent

variable measured how successful international students felt they were regarding their academic performance. Demographic questions included information about students' age, gender, educational level, and continent of origin. Students used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) to answer all questions except the demographics, and it took an average of 8.6 minutes to complete the survey.

Procedure

Early in the Fall 2014 semester, an online questionnaire was sent to all international students who had registered for classes at the set university. The University International Center served as the contact person that emailed the survey to the international students, which was re-sent after a week. Data was collected for a total of two weeks. Participants responded based on how they felt about each item, and 349 students responded to the questionnaire. The quantitative method was used in analyzing data for this study, and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis. Factors such as lack of English language proficiency, cultural shock, financial needs, and technological experiences were used for further analysis in this study. The international center, writing center, student success center, and counseling center were examined to determine if international students from different continents make use of these services and if these services assist in minimizing their academic challenges.

Results

This study found that international students face various challenges while studying in U.S. schools. Even with such challenges, these students do not give-up, rather they seek support from on-campus resources such as: the international center, writing center, student success center, and the counseling center. The principal areas of challenges to international students included in this study are: English Language proficiency, cultural shock, financial needs, and technological experiences. Previous studies have investigated the challenges of international students in general, however, this study compares the challenges of international students based on their continent of origin.

English proficiency

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the English proficiency levels of students from different continents. A significant difference was found in such comparison ($F(3,331) = 24.48, p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was used to specify where this significant difference existed. Results indicated that international students of Asian origin were the most deficient in English Language proficiency ($M = 26.69, sd = 6.76$), followed by students of African descent ($M = 25.17, sd = 7.62$). Whereas students from Asia and Africa were closely related in their English Language proficiency, a significant difference was found between these groups of students and those from other continents. Students from North America, apart from the U.S., were found to have a higher English Language proficiency ($M = 22.20, sd = 6.02$), compared to students of European descent ($M = 19.76, sd = 5.69$).

Cultural shock

Once again, a one-way ANOVA was used to assess the extent to which a new culture affected international students at the chosen U.S. mid-western university. A significant difference was found between the continents in this regard ($F(3,321) = 6.58, p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was used to ratify this significant difference. Results indicated that international students of African origin experienced the most cultural shock ($M = 25.06, sd = 7.46$), and this was significantly different from international students from other continents. Students from Asia, Europe, and North America did not show significant differences in their level of cultural shock. Asian students were slightly higher in their level of cultural shock ($M = 22.30, sd = 6.78$), compared to European ($M = 21.11, sd = 8.88$), and North American students ($M = 20.31, sd = 7.79$).

Financial Difficulties

From a one-way ANOVA analysis, a significant difference was found in terms of financial hardship between students of different continents ($F(3,330) = 36.38, p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was once more used to specify where this significant difference existed. Results indicated that international students of African origin had the most financial need ($M = 12.31, sd = 3.59$), followed by students of Asian descent ($M = 9.82, sd = 2.88$). Moreover, African students showed a significant difference in their financial difficulties in comparison with students from elsewhere. Meanwhile Asian and North American students expressed similarities in their levels of financial hardship ($M = 8.80, sd = 2.80$ for North American vs $M = 9.82, sd = 2.88$ for Asia). On the other hand, European students proved have the least financially need ($M = 6.61, sd = 2.58$).

Technological skills

From a one-way ANOVA analysis, a significant difference was found in the levels of technological know-how of students from the different continents considered ($F(3,327) = 18.55, p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was again used to ratify this significant difference. Results indicated that international students of African origin were the most technologically deficient ($M = 9.97, sd = 2.37$). Asian and North American students were once more closely related in their degrees of technological know-how ($M = 8.67, sd = 2.58$ for Asia vs $M = 8.09, sd = 1.59$ for North America). Contrarily, European students proved to be the most technologically skillful of all international students, with a significant difference relative to the rest of the students ($M = 6.52, sd = 2.45$).

Feeling of success

A one-way ANOVA was used to assess the extent to which students felt successful amidst the challenges they faced, comparing students from the different continents considered. A significant difference was found in such comparison ($F(3,332) = 32.90, p < .05$). Tukey's

HSD was used to specify where this significant difference existed. Regardless of African students having the greatest challenges, they felt most successful ($M = 4.43$, $sd = .58$) when compared with other international students. However, Asian students felt the least successful ($M = 3.58$, $sd = .78$ for Asian students). No significant difference was found between the feeling of success among African, European, and North American students. The next set of international students to feel less successful was the North Americans ($M = 4.24$, $sd = .61$), followed by the European students ($M = 4.22$, $sd = .72$).

Having presented results on the comparative studies of challenges faced by international students from the different continents included in this study and how successful these students feel amidst such challenges, the subsequent paragraphs present results on how students from different continents make use of the various campus resources used in this study.

The international center

From the one-way ANOVA analysis, no significant difference was found among the students regarding help sought from the international center ($F(3,332) = .15$, $p > .05$). International students from Asia visit the international center the most ($M = 3.40$, $sd = 1.02$), followed by European students ($M = 3.36$, $sd = 1.13$), then North Americans ($M = 3.33$, $sd = 1.11$), and lastly Africans ($M = 3.30$, $sd = 1.30$). It should be noted that these median and standard deviation values are closely related.

Writing center

From the one-way ANOVA analysis, a significant difference was found among students from the different continents vis-à-vis visits to the writing center ($F(3,332) = 7.35$, $p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was therefore used to specify where this significant difference existed. Results indicated that international students of Asian origin visited the writing center the most ($M = 3.10$, $sd = 1.33$). This result was significantly different from the frequency of visits to this center by students of other continents. Students of African descent were the next most frequent to visit the writing center in search of assistance ($M = 2.92$, $sd = 1.46$). On the other hand, European and North American students seldom visited the writing center, and no statistical difference was found regarding visits to this center among these two student groups ($M = 2.64$, $sd = 1.29$ for European students vs $M = 2.07$, $sd = 1.16$ for North American students).

Student success center

A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the degree of visits to this center by the different student groups. A significant difference was found in such comparison ($F(3,327) = 8.93$, $p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was used to verify the significant difference. Results indicated that a statistically significant difference in terms of visits to the student success center existed between students of Asian descent compared to those from other continents. Asians visited the student success center the most ($M = 2.54$, $sd = 1.19$), followed by students of African descent ($M = 1.99$, $sd = 1.27$). European students ranked third in visits to this center ($M = 1.83$, $sd = 1.11$), and the North American students ranked fourth ($M = 1.72$, $sd = 1.01$).

The counseling center

A one-way ANOVA was again used to assess international student interaction with the counseling center, comparing students from the different continents included in this study. A significant difference was likewise found in such a comparison ($F(3,332) = 6.45$, $p < .05$). Tukey's HSD was used to verify where this significant difference existed. It was found that international students of European descent visited the counseling center the most ($M = 2.33$, $sd = 1.64$), followed by North American students ($M = 2.03$, $sd = 1.39$), then Asians ($M = 2.01$, $sd = 1.15$), and lastly Africans ($M = 1.45$, $sd = 0.85$). As may be deduced, there was a statistically significant difference in the level of interaction of African students with the counseling center compared to international students from elsewhere. Meanwhile, no significant difference existed in the levels of interaction of Asian, European, and North American students with this center.

Overall, these results indicate that all international students face challenges. Among these students, those from Africa faced the most challenges. Contrarily, this student group felt the most successful and were not the first to seek assistance from helpful campus resources. Some correlation was found between English language problems and the writing center. For example, European students faced the least English language challenges and as a result scarcely visited the writing center.

Discussion and Analysis

This study looks at how international students from different continents make use of campus resources to help improve their academic performance. It assesses how English language proficiency, financial need, cultural shock, and technological skills affect international students as they pursue their higher learning, and hence, improve on their academic success by making use of on-campus resources. Results indicate that international students who make use of on-campus resources, irrespective of their continent of origin, performed better, and that international students from different continents utilized campus services differently.

Proficiency in the academic English language is necessary to attain success in higher institutions (Woodrow, 2006). Most higher education institutions require a high level of English language proficiency before admission into the institution. As such, it becomes paramount for international students to be proficient in academic English in order to meet course requirements (Andrade 2006). Studies have shown how a deficiency in English language skills negatively affects international students' academic performance (Andrade, 2006; Benzie, 2010; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). The present study separated international students by their continent of origin, and found that students of Asian descent were more likely to face academic English problems when compared to students from other continents followed by African international students. Research had previously noted students of Asian origin to be more likely to have academic English language problems in Western higher education institutions (Carroll & Ryan, 2005; Lee, 2010; Zhai, 2002). Previous

studies also found African international students to face challenges with the English language (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Even though these sets of international students face challenges with the English language, institutions provide on-campus resources to assist them in achieving success. The present study found Asian students visit the writing and student success center the most to enhance their study followed by African international students. Banjong (2015) had earlier found international students visit the writing and student success center to improve on their academic success.

Regarding cultural shock, this present study found that students from other continents, specifically Asia, North America, and Europe, did not experience a high level of cultural shock when compared to African students. This study however, aligns with Constantine et al.'s (2005) report that African international students face cultural shock in the U.S. The present study found international students of African origin experience the highest cultural shock when compared to students from other continents. Prior to African international students moving to the U.S., they have the perception that their personal and academic life would be improved compared to that of their home country (Constantine et al, 2005; Mori, 2000). However, studies have shown that African international students often become emotionally frustrated as a result of cultural shock, which can lead to numerous health problems (Fang & Myers, 2001; Krieger & Sidney, 1996; Neuspiel, 1996). Even though African international students face a higher level of cultural shock, this present study found that they rarely visit the counseling center for help when compared with international students from other continents. Nebedum-Ezeh (1997) had earlier noted that African international students hardly use the counseling center, rather, he found these students use direct coping strategies to combat stress and cultural shock related problems. Constantine, Okazaki, and Utsey (2004) show that collectivistic societies believe that there is stigma attached to receiving counseling from strangers. This is because those that come from collectivistic societies like Africa and Asia believe that not all personal information can be shared (Lee & Opio, 2011; Kisang, 2010; Mwara, 2008). They are of the understanding that issues concerning mental health and well-being are private issues and should not be discussed with people they do not know. However in this study, Asian international students tended to be more likely to seek help than African students.

Relating to financial challenges, this study supports the result of Constantine et al. (2005), which explains that African international students have difficulties paying their school tuition, as well as meeting their basic living expenses such as rent, food, and clothing. This present study found that students from Asia, North America, and Europe had fewer financial difficulties than African students. As seen in this study, African students had the highest difficulty in both cultural shock and financial difficulties. Students are less likely to recommend an institution if they encountered financial difficulties while attending that school (Bennett, 2003; Young, & Lockyer, 2007; Lee, 2010; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). African students need to feel socially and financially stable, if not comfortable, before they can refer the institution they are attending to future students.

Considering the importance of technology to students, studies have shown that not all international students are exposed to technological use in the same manner (Andrade, 2006; Carroll, & Ryan, 2007; Kennedy, Judd, Churchward, Gray, & Krause, 2008). This study found international students of African origin were the most technologically deficient when compared to students from Asia, Europe, and North America. Understanding such technological differences faced by international students is of crucial importance to higher educational institutions so that they can avoid placing all international students on the same standard.

It is not surprising that all international students from this study sought help from the international center. This could be because the international center is the gateway for all international students, since the center is their first stop upon arrival to the institution. They visit the international center to stay in good status. Hence, international centers could also be a resource unit that connects international students to all the other institutional centers.

Conclusion

This study found that international students face numerous challenges in U.S. schools. Instead of quitting, these students developed resilience by tapping into the resources provided on campus to support students with different challenges. Examples of such resources included in the present study are the international center, writing center, student success center, and the counseling center. As noted previously, prior literature on the present subject has largely reported that the principal areas of challenges to international students include English language deficiencies, cultural shock, financial difficulties, and deficiencies in basic technological skills. Whereas most prior studies investigated these challenges in terms of international students in general, comparative studies of the challenges of international students originating from different continents around the world and various ways by which these students surmount such difficulties are non-existent. Therefore, the present work focused on English language proficiency, cultural shock, financial difficulties, and technological skills of international students at a chosen U.S. mid-western university; whilst comparing the different degrees to which these factors affect international students from different continents. The study paid particular attention to how these students brace these difficulties and achieve their academic dreams.

Additionally, the present work probed how the chosen variables mediate the extent to which students felt successful. The study found that international students are affected in different ways by the selected variables and likewise react differently to their difficulties. Notably, despite all challenges, international students originating from Africa felt the most successful among all international students, whereas Asian students took advantage of resources and services at the writing center and student success center the most to improve on their academic performance.

Further Study

Considering that the present study found African international students to feel more successful in their studies even though they face many challenges, it would be important in future studies to explore the reasons why they feel successful compared to students from

different continents, and why they do not often seek help from useful campus resources. Considering that most African international students do not seek help as compared to other international students as they brace through their studies in the U.S., further study is also needed to explore whether African international students are aware of the services and social networks available to them in their higher institutions.

Further study should seek to answer the question of why international students do not make use of some of the institutional resources, such as counseling centers available to them on campus. It has been proven that the counseling center has been of great benefit to students' academic performance and psychological well-being for those who make use of the center (Cho & Yu, 2015; Mori, 2000; Nilsson, Berkel, Flores, & Lucas, 2004). Therefore, further study should also explore how the counseling unit can design better ways to motivate international students, especially the African students, to visit the center.

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