1995

Acculturation and self-esteem as predictors of acculturative stress among international students at the University of Wollongong

Ashraf Gholamrezaei

University of Wollongong

Recommended Citation

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
ACCULTURATION AND SELF-ESTEEM AS PREDICTORS
OF ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of

Doctor of Public Health

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

ASHRAF GHOLAMREZAEI

Department of Public Health and Nutrition

December 1995
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis is carried out by me and it does not have any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in this thesis.

Signed

Date: December 1995
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to thank the following people who have been integral to the preparation of this thesis.

• First of all to my supervisor professor Ross Harris who his constructive criticism and support have lead me to complete this thesis.

• I would like to gratefully thank Hazel England for her helpful comments, editorial assistance, and most importantly her unwaivering emotional and academic encouragement.

• Special thanks to Marcella Carfield for her kindness of spirit, generosity of time and ever faithful offers for typing assistance.

• I would like to thank lecturers and staff of the Department of Public Health in the University of Wollongong for their academic knowledge which provided the foundation which enabled the completion of this work.

• Thank also to the International Office staff in the University of Wollongong for their assistance with the data collection.

• I also wish to thank Dr M. T., Iman for his comments and consultation with the computerized data analysis.

• Specific thanks, must be given to my research participants who gave their time without hesitation.

• Last, but not least, I would like to thank my daughters Rozhia and Hanieh for their patience and support during my study period.

Without those named above, I would not have been able to complete this thesis. For this I am deeply grateful.
ABSTRACT

International students travel from their homelands in search of continuing education in overseas countries and there is a general expectation that they will encounter acculturative stress.

This study highlights variables such as acculturation, self-esteem and socio-demographic factors which play an important role in the acculturative stress of international students at The University of Wollongong, in Australia.

One hundred and seventy-three international students from 11 nationalities at Wollongong University completed a questionnaire which assesses acculturative stress in relationship to acculturation, self-esteem and socio-demographic variables.

The results indicated that acculturation, self-esteem and nationality are the best predictors of acculturative stress. Multiple regression analysis indicated that these variables account for 59% of the variance in acculturative stress. As hypothesised, higher levels of acculturative stress are associated with lower levels of acculturation and self-esteem. Furthermore, the associations between acculturative stress and age, financial situation, visiting home, place of residence, language background and religion are significant. The study results pointed out that acculturative stress is not significantly associated with marital status, faculty, duration of stay in Australia, sex or fees payment.

The findings of this study suggest that it would be important for educators and target group assessors in the field of mental health to give special attention to international students in Australia.
CONTENTS

Declaration........................................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgments................................................................................................................................. iii
Abstract................................................................................................................................................ iv
Contents................................................................................................................................................ v
Figures.................................................................................................................................................. vi
Tables.................................................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION
1.1 Introduction................................................................................................................................... 1
1.2 The purpose of the study................................................................................................................ 5
1.3 The significance of the study.......................................................................................................... 5
1.4 The outline of the Chapters........................................................................................................... 7

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Introduction
2.2 Acculturation................................................................................................................................ 8
2.3 Acculturative Stress.......................................................................................................................... 21
   2.3.1 Overview of stress.................................................................................................................... 21
   2.3.2 Change and stress.................................................................................................................... 22
   2.3.3 Acculturation and Stress......................................................................................................... 29
   2.3.4 Moderating factors.................................................................................................................. 31
2.4 Self-Esteem.................................................................................................................................... 55
   2.4.1 Self-esteem as a personal resource....................................................................................... 58
   2.4.2 Self-esteem, self-presentation, and future interaction............................................................ 60
   2.4.3 Affirmative self/other attitudes............................................................................................... 62
   2.4.4 Social stigma and self-esteem............................................................................................... 64
   2.4.5 Communication in assimilation deviance and alienation state........................................... 66
   2.4.6 Communication from the host culture.................................................................................... 66
   2.4.7 Self-concept as an indicator of acculturation........................................................................ 68
   2.4.8 Self-esteem and the variables............................................................................................... 70
2.5 Theoretical framework.................................................................................................................. 72
   2.5.1 Acculturative stress................................................................................................................. 73
   2.5.2 Factors influencing acculturative stress............................................................................... 77

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction................................................................................................................................... 90
3.2 Survey method............................................................................................................................... 91
3.3 Sampling......................................................................................................................................... 91
FIGURES

Figure I. Relationships between acculturation and stress as modified by other factors.................................................................203

Figure II. Four varieties of acculturation based on orientation to two issues.............................................................................204
APPENDICES

APPENDICES.1 Non significant results
   APPENDIX.1.1 Acculturative stress by sex ........................................... 207
   APPENDIX.1.2 Acculturative stress by marital status ............................. 207
   APPENDIX.1.3 Acculturative stress by faculty ....................................... 207
   APPENDIX.1.4 Acculturative stress by level of study .............................. 208
   APPENDIX.1.5 Acculturative stress by payment of fees ........................... 208
APPENDIX.2 Permission from editor ....................................................... 210
APPENDIX.3 Ethics committee approval .................................................. 212
APPENDIX.4 Consent form ....................................................................... 214
APPENDIX.5 Letter accompanying the questionnaire ................................. 216
APPENDIX.6 Information sheet for participants ......................................... 218
APPENDIX.7 Questionnaire ....................................................................... 220
### TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Number</th>
<th>Table Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>International students in the study</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of student gender</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Sex of the respondents and their marital status</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Age groups of the subjects and their sex</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the sample in different faculties</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the sample's level of study</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects visits home</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of fee payment arrangements</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects financial status</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects places of residence</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects religion</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects language backgrounds</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the respondents nationalities</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>Reliability co-efficient of acculturation, acculturative stress and self-esteem</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>Factor matrix</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>The proportion of variance in the item explained by the factor</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects replication on acculturative stress items</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the respondents acculturative stress scores</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the acculturative items</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the subjects acculturation scores</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of the self-esteem items</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>Frequency distribution of self-esteem scores</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>ANOVA Table for the comparison between male and female acculturative stress scores</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>ANOVA Table for the comparison between single and married persons acculturative stress scores</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>ANOVA Table for the comparison between acculturative stress scores with different faculties</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>ANOVA Table for the comparison between acculturative stress scores with different sources of fees payment</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.26 ANOVA Table for the comparison between acculturative stress scores with different religions .............................................. 123
Table 4.27 ANOVA Table for the comparison between undergraduate and postgraduate acculturative stress scores .............................................. 124
Table 4.28 ANOVA Table for the comparison between the subjects acculturative stress and their visit home scores .............................................. 124
Table 4.29 ANOVA Table for the comparison between acculturative stress scores with finance .............................................. 125
Table 4.30 ANOVA Table for the comparison between the respondents acculturative stress scores and their place of residence .............................................. 125
Table 4.31 ANOVA Table for the comparison between acculturative stress scores of English and non-English language background .............................................. 125
Table 4.32 ANOVA Table for the comparison between the subjects acculturative stress scores according to nationality .............................................. 126
Table 4.33 The association between acculturative stress and acculturation, self-esteem age and duration of stay .............................................. 127
Table 4.34 Acculturative stress by the number of visits to the home country .............................................. 129
Table 4.35 Acculturative stress by the financial situation .............................................. 129
Table 4.36 Acculturative stress by the place of residence .............................................. 130
Table 4.37 Acculturative stress by language background .............................................. 130
Table 4.38 Acculturative stress by religion .............................................. 131
Table 4.39 Acculturative stress by nationality .............................................. 131
Table 4.40 Mean, standard deviation and number of subjects of the variables .............................................. 133
Table 4.41 (Part A). Correlation matrix and 2-tailed significance of the variables .............................................. 134
(Part B). Correlation matrix and 2-tailed significance of the variables .............................................. 135
Table 4.42 Regression of acculturative stress on acculturation .............................................. 136
Table 4.43 Regression of acculturative stress on self-esteem and acculturation .............................................. 137
Table 4.44 Regression of acculturative stress of nationality, self-esteem and acculturation .............................................. 137