

Research on Cross-cultural Adaptation Management of International Students Studying in China from the Perspective of Psychological Contract

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Abstract. This study used SPSS software to conduct descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis to explore the relationship between psychological contract and cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China, and found that school reality responsibility, school development responsibility and student development responsibility have significant positive effects on the psychological adaptation of international students in China, and all four dimensions of the psychological contract have significant positive effects on the study adaptation of international students in China, based on this result this Based on the results, this study proposes corresponding management measures and suggestions from the perspective of the psychological contract to improve the cross-cultural adaptation ability of international students so that they can adapt to life in China more quickly and complete their studies successfully.

Keywords: Psychological Contract; International Students in China; Cross-cultural Adaptation.

1. Introduction

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the topic of deepening and expanding mutually advantageous cooperation and exchanges, as well as mutual learning in the field of education with countries across the globe, has become increasingly prominent. Concurrently, there is a growing sense of urgency to accelerate and broaden the opening up of education in the new era. Presently, our nation stands as the world's largest source country of international students and is the foremost destination country for studying abroad in Asi [1]. However, as a distinct group among college students in China, international students possess unique identities as learners, exchangers, and expatriates. Not only do they confront academic, friendship, emotional, financial, and employment pressures while residing in a foreign land, but they are also confronted with the challenges arising from environmental changes. The transition experienced by international students in China from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar cultural milieu may result in the manifestation of "culture shock" and evoke psychological responses marked by feelings of loss, doubt, rejection, and even fear, thereby hindering their ability to adapt to cross-cultural surroundings.

International student education serves as an important channel to enhance friendly relations between China and other countries. With the gradual increase in the number of international students coming to China, intercultural adaptation has become one of the key competencies for international students. Intercultural adaptation is a phenomenon in which two groups of individuals

with different cultural backgrounds have sustained and direct cultural contact, resulting in changes in the original cultural patterns of one or both parties. The study found that the pressure of language communication barriers, cultural differences, interpersonal difficulties, thinking mode conversion, and role confusion caused by cross-cultural adaptation problems will seriously affect the physical and mental health of international students in China.

For international students in China, from the beginning of receiving the admission notice, studying in China will give them certain psychological expectations, including the school's learning environment, reward and punishment system, etc. The international students and the school have formed this kind of informal and implicit relationship [2]. It is a sexual contract, which has a certain degree of control and internal drive, and has a certain impact on the attitude, behavior and adaptability of international students. As an important theory to study the psychology, emotion, attitude and behavior of organizational members, psychological contract theory has very important theoretical and practical significance for improving the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China. However, in the existing research on the psychological contract of college students, most of them focuses on the relationship between the psychological contract and the ideological and political education of college students, their satisfaction, and the tendency of graduates to leave their jobs. , based on the psychological contract theory, this study explores the impact of the psychological contract theory on the intercultural adaptation of international students from the perspectives of schools and students, and puts forward countermeasures and suggestions to provide empirical evidence for the intercultural adaptation of international students in China, with a view to constructing A good contractual relationship between international students and schools can promote the smooth and orderly social and cultural life and study life of international students in China, complete their studies in China smoothly, and promote the development of international education in China.

2. Objects and Methods

2.1 Research object

A simple random sampling method was used to conduct a questionnaire survey among 230 international students in China from May to June 2023, and all surveys were conducted with the informed consent of the respondents. The questionnaires are designed to be bilingual in Chinese and English so that they can be filled in smoothly by the respondents. A total of 230 questionnaires were distributed, and 226 valid questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 98%.

2.2 Research tools

2.2.1 General Questionnaire

A self-compiled general situation questionnaire was used to measure the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, Chinese proficiency, time in China, and degree-seeking status.

2.2.2 Intercultural adaptation scale

The cross-cultural adaptation was measured by Xiang Lei's *"Intercultural Adaptation Questionnaire for International Students in China"* in her master's thesis. The questionnaire is divided into psychological adaptation, that is, the psychological well-being and satisfaction of

international students in China during cross-cultural adaptation (3 items), and learning adaptation, that is, includes motivation to receive education, the target of knowledge use, learning performance, satisfaction with the learning environment, the adaptation process and learning pressure generated by international students during their study abroad in China (3 items), and social-cultural adaptation is an important psychological change in cross-cultural adaptation research, including international students' living conditions in China, their adaptation to Chinese culture, interpersonal relationships and their relationship with Chinese society (5 items). The Cronbach's α coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.780, and the KMO value was 0.725. The table has good reliability and validity.

2.2.3 Psychological contract scale

Using the "*Psychological Contract Scale for International Students in China*" [3] to measure the psychological contract of international students. The scale is divided into a school sub-scale and a student sub-scale. The school sub-scale is divided into two dimensions: realistic responsibility and developmental responsibility. Realistic responsibility refers to students' expectations of the school in their daily life and learning (4 items). And development responsibilities, that is, students' self-cultivation and development (3 items). The Cronbach's α coefficient for the school subscale is 0.968, the KMO value is 0.918, $P < 0.01$, and has good reliability and validity. The student sub-scale is divided into realistic responsibilities, that is, students' expectations of their own responsibilities and obligations during school (7 items) and developmental responsibilities, that is, students' expectations for their own future development (3 items), and the Cronbach's α coefficient of the scale is 0.976, KMO value is 0.937, $P < 0.01$, with good reliability and validity.

2.3 Statistical methods

Statistical software SPSS 26.0 was used to analyze the data. Enumeration data is described by rate/constituent ratio, measurement data is described by $\bar{X} \pm S$, the univariate analysis uses t-test and F-test for difference analysis, and correlation analysis uses Pearson correlation coefficient to analyze the correlation between psychological contract and cross-cultural adaptation. Multiple linear regression analysis of the impact of psychological contract on intercultural adaptation. The test level is two-sided, $\alpha = 0.05$.

3. Results

3.1 General conditions of the respondents

73.9% of the international students surveyed are from South Asian countries, 17.4% are from African countries, 7.8% are from Southeast Asian countries, and 0.9% are from West Asian countries. The survey results show that 56.2% of the respondents are males and 43.8% are females. The questionnaire divides Chinese proficiency into seven levels: failure to pass any Chinese language exam, passing HSK1, passing HSK2, passing HSK3, passing HSK4, passing HSK5, and passing HSK6. The survey results show that the number of people who pass any Chinese language exam is the highest, accounting for 31.9%; The minimum score for passing the HSK6 exam is 0%. The questionnaire divides the time spent in China into five levels: <1 year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years, and >4 years. The survey results show that the highest number of international students who have been in China for less than 1 year is 85, accounting for 37.6%. The survey results showed that 154 students came to China to pursue a bachelor's degree, with the highest proportion accounting

for 68.1%; There are 27 people pursuing a master's degree, accounting for 11.9%, the lowest proportion; There are 45 people pursuing doctoral degrees, accounting for 19.9%. In this study, the psychological contract score is 4.23 ± 0.07 , the school's actual responsibility dimension score is 4.24 ± 0.07 , the school's development responsibility dimension score is 4.10 ± 0.07 , the student's actual responsibility score is 4.31 ± 0.07 , and the student's development responsibility score is 4.22 ± 0.07 . The cross-cultural adaptation score was 3.48 ± 0.03 , the psychological adaptation dimension score was 4.31 ± 0.05 , the socio-cultural adaptation score was 3.38 ± 0.05 , and the learning adaptation score was 2.82 ± 0.06 . The t-test and variance analysis was performed on the scores of cross-cultural adaptation and the psychological contract. The results showed that there were statistically significant differences in the cross-cultural adaptation of international students with different Chinese proficiency, time in China, degrees, and learning styles ($P < 0.05$). There was no statistically significant difference in experience ($P > 0.05$). There were statistically significant differences in the distribution of psychological contract scores in terms of Chinese proficiency, time in China, and degree study ($P < 0.05$), but there were no statistically significant differences in gender, experience abroad, and learning styles ($P > 0.05$).

3.2 Correlation analysis

This study analyzes the three dimensions of socio-cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and learning adaptation in cross-cultural adaptation, as well as the school development responsibility, school reality responsibility, student development responsibility, and student reality responsibility in psychological contracts. The results show that there is no significant correlation between the social-cultural adaptation of international students coming to China and the school's real responsibility, school development responsibility, student's real responsibility, and student development responsibility; There is a significant positive correlation between psychological adaptation and school reality responsibility, school development responsibility, and student development responsibility; There is a significant positive correlation between learning adaptation and school's realistic responsibility, school's developmental responsibility, student's realistic responsibility, and student's developmental responsibility.

3.3 Regression analysis

This study conducted a multiple linear regression analysis between the three dimensions of socio-cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and learning adaptation in cross-cultural adaptation and the four dimensions of school development responsibility, school reality responsibility, student development responsibility, and student reality responsibility in the psychological contract.

In the case of controlled variables, the regression results were $\beta = 0.240$, $P < 0.01$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.054$ for psychological adjustment and school reality responsibility, $\beta = 0.319$, $P < 0.01$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.099$ for school development responsibility, and $\beta = 0.173$, $P < 0.05$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.028$ for student development responsibility. According to the results, the regression results of the four dimensions of learning adaptation and psychological contract were $\beta = 0.153$, $P < 0.05$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.089$; $\beta = 0.148$, $P < 0.05$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.088$; $\beta = 0.222$, $P < 0.01$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.0116$; $\beta = 0.175$, $P < 0.01$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.097$. In contrast, the psychological contract's school reality responsibility, school development responsibility, student reality responsibility, and student development responsibility all had no significant effect on socio-cultural adjustment, while student reality responsibility also had no significant effect on psychological adjustment.

4. Discussion

4.1 Scale scores

In this study, the psychological contract score of international students in China is 4.23 ± 0.66 , and the cross-cultural adaptation score is 3.48 ± 0.30 . The lowest score is learning adaptation, with a score of 2.82 ± 0.06 . This indicates that international students face the most severe problem of learning and adaptation in cross-cultural adaptation. The reason for this result may be that international students who have just arrived in China may initially face maladaptation in language, learning modes, teaching methods, and other aspects due to changes in the environment and cultural differences. These difficulties can all add significantly to their sense of stress and thus make adaptation more difficult. Students who pass HSK4 can talk about a wider range of topics in Chinese and communicate fluently with native Chinese speakers. With HSK5 test takers can read Chinese newspapers and magazines, enjoy Chinese films and television programs, and speak in more complete Chinese. The survey results show that 72.2% of students have not passed the HSK4 exam. Only 27.8% of students passed the HSK4 and HSK5 exams, indicating that the Chinese standard of international students coming to China is low and only a small number of them can use Chinese more proficiently. Being able to use Chinese for communication among international students in China does not necessarily mean being able to effectively and correctly use Chinese for professional academic learning. International students who are not very good at Chinese have relatively difficult communication in their study and life during their studies in China, and their learning effect and efficiency in courses taught in Chinese are relatively poor, and they are under greater pressure to use Chinese to complete learning tasks during the learning process. The huge difference in the cultural background also affects the degree of mastery of Chinese and thus affects the process of its integration into Chinese culture to a certain extent. In addition, the increase in the number of students and the diversity of cultural backgrounds may lead to some oversights in the daily management and study life of students. The teaching mode, methods and management style of schools and teachers may, to a certain extent, lack consideration for the cultural heterogeneity of international students and lack relevance, which may to a certain extent undermine the adaptation of international students to study. The above reasons may lead to greater learning pressure and reduced comfort for international students studying in China. Therefore, the score of the learning adaptation dimension is the lowest.

The highest is psychological adaptation, with a score of 4.31 ± 0.05 . The possible reason is that the school provides better learning and living environment, equipment resources, services, and spiritual support for international students during their study abroad. Students can communicate with teachers and schools in a timely manner when encountering problems. Teachers and schools can also solve the students' life and psychological distress to a certain extent, thereby reducing the psychological problems caused by maladaptation. In addition, good friendships among international students in China can help them to alleviate negative emotions and enhance their psychological adaptability.

The sociocultural adaptation score is medium, with a score of 3.38 ± 0.05 . Each country has its own culture and different social norms. Western cultures, for example, focus on individualism, while Eastern cultures emphasize collectivism. This result may be due to the fact that 74.8% of the respondents in this study are from South and West Asian countries, possibly because of the same religious beliefs and similar eating habits; or because their home countries have good national

relations with China and are geographically close; and also possibly because they are all Asian countries with relatively few cultural differences which result in a better degree of socio-cultural adaptation.

4.2 Psychological Contract and Cross-cultural Adaptation

The results of the study show that both the psychological contract school reality responsibility and developmental responsibility have a positive effect on the intercultural psychological adjustment and learning adjustment of international students, the student reality responsibility has a positive effect on learning adjustment and the student developmental responsibility has a positive effect on psychological adjustment and learning adjustment. This suggests that the better the fulfillment of the psychological contract, the better the student's adjustment.

The psychological contract between the school and the student is mutually reinforcing and a good contractual relationship can only be established if both parties take their responsibilities and duties seriously. The reason for this outcome may be that the school provides a good living and learning environment with moral support and regular psychological counseling and emotional grooming for students, which can go some way towards meeting students' expectations and needs, providing them with good emotional values and reducing their emotional burden. At the same time, students are able to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities on the basis of the good conditions provided by the school and give timely feedback to the school and teachers on their problems so that they can make appropriate suggestions. This alleviates to a certain extent the students' sense of discomfort caused by changes in the natural and human environment, reduces their learning pressure and psychological stress, and effectively promotes their physical and mental health. Psychological contract school development responsibility, school reality responsibility, student reality responsibility, and student development responsibility have no significant effect on the socio-cultural adjustment of international students in China. As mentioned earlier socio-cultural adaptation includes the living conditions of international students in China, their adaptation to Chinese culture, interpersonal relations and their relationship with Chinese society. The reason for this result may be that the relationship between international students' socio-cultural adjustment and their understanding and acceptance of social culture, social norms and social values, which is not reflected in the expectations of schools, is more evident.

5. Countermeasures and suggestions

5.1 Actual Responsibilities of Schools

Schools should be more proactive and take the initiative to investigate and understand the needs and expectations of students, provide a good living and learning environment, reduce students' distress and create conditions to help international students integrate more quickly and better into their study life in China. As international students come from all over the world and have diverse cultural backgrounds, schools should take into account the different cultural backgrounds of students when providing services and a good environment, and make some distinctions on the basis of convergence management. Some studies have shown that homesickness can affect the degree of cross-cultural adaptation of international students [4]. Therefore, schools should create a good campus atmosphere so that international students can experience a sense of affinity in the school and enhance their sense of belonging to the school so that they can better integrate into their study

abroad life, which will help students alleviate a certain amount of homesickness and thus reduce their negative emotions.

5.2 Responsibilities for School Development

When in an unfamiliar environment, people can magnify the difficulties and stresses they encounter. On the one hand, it is important to strengthen the intercultural awareness, communication skills and service concepts of the management and teaching staff groups, to provide intercultural psychological training for the teaching staff groups in contact with international students, to pay attention to student's physical and mental health and intercultural adaptation problems, to take the initiative to identify and solve the practical problems of international students in China, and to continuously improve the service and management. On the other hand, psychological counseling is provided to international students to encourage and guide them to face reality with a positive attitude, relieve their psychological pressure, reduce their academic tension and powerlessness, and help them adapt to the new cultural environment and complete their studies as soon as possible. It also carries out high-quality cultural exchanges between Chinese and foreign students, knowledge quizzes, folk culture and other activities to promote good interpersonal relationships between international students and their surrounding classmates, let them experience the rich and colorful university life in China, enhance the diversity of school life, provide international students with a wider range of options for indirect exposure to Chinese culture and help them gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, help them eliminate loneliness, isolation, and anxiety on a psychological and spiritual level, and at the same time achieve good cultural interaction based on respect for cultural differences and improve the social and cultural adaptation ability of international students. It should be noted that in the process of promoting Chinese cultural integration, universities should consciously emphasize the dual identity of international students as learners and sojourners, give them sufficient space for self-development, stimulate their motivation to study, live and adapt to the culture, encourage them to step out of their original circle of friends and actively engage in Chinese intercourse, cross multiple geographical, political, cultural and linguistic borders as soon as possible, and accelerate their integration into their new environment.

5.3 Students' Practical Responsibilities

Simon Marginson argues that international education is often seen as a journey for international students from their home culture to the culture of the country they are studying in and that a crucial element of this is their agency and self-formation [5]. For international students coming to China, it is common to feel stress and frustration as their previous cultural environment changes and social ties break down. Therefore, universities should change their educational philosophy from management to governance, focus more on stimulating the initiative and creativity of international students, and consciously guide and motivate international students to achieve positive self-improvement [6]. And secondly, strengthen the entrance education for international students in China, clarify the responsibilities and obligations of international students during their schooling, strengthen effective communication between schools, international student managers, teachers and international students, and dynamically track the psychological contract, so as to take action against the violation and rupture of the psychological contract. Timely and necessary remedial measures to improve students' fitness and maintain students' physical and mental health. In addition, international students coming to China are guided to increase the intensity of their willingness to change themselves, to actively adjust their cognitive structure, to prepare themselves

psychologically, intellectually and linguistically, and to encourage them to participate more actively in intercultural interactions, to accelerate their intercultural adaptation and to promote the development of an open, confident and optimistic intercultural identity.

5.4 Improve Learning Adaptability

Appropriately increase the opportunities for Chinese language training or improve the long-term mechanism for Chinese language training, establish long-term Chinese language training courses for foreign students coming to China, teach foreign students at different levels according to their overall Chinese language level, and provide the most basic Chinese language teaching to foreign students with no basic Chinese. Some international students have difficulties in adapting to the teaching environment, teaching conditions and teaching methods in China due to their language comprehension, different education systems and curricula in China and abroad. For this reason, should be constructing a teacher-led interactive support group for Chinese and foreign students can enable foreign students to use the Chinese language for professional learning under the proper guidance of teachers and the help of Chinese students, thus promoting the adaptation of international students to the curriculum and teaching environment of Chinese higher education institutions, improving students' Chinese language proficiency and reducing the pressure of Chinese language learning. According to the survey, the low Chinese language level of international students affects the completion of their Chinese course tasks. For this reason, when assigning Chinese tasks, universities should also start from the shallower to the deeper and follow the principle of gradual progress, giving students a process of gradual acceptance and adaptation. Influenced by the mass media, some international students have a fixed impression of China and Chinese culture before they come to study in China, and even interpret Chinese culture in a biased and stereotypical way. In this regard, incorporate the path system of understanding Chinese culture into the teaching of Chinese language courses for foreign students, increase the ways for them to understand and understand Chinese culture, introducing the perspective of contrasting Chinese and foreign values in accordance with the country around the behavior of everyday social interactions. Enable them to understand Chinese culture more comprehensively, promote the understanding and transformation of cultural internalization, and enhance cultural Identity.

6. Conclusion

Decades of economic development have modernized China's education and continued to open up China's education to the outside world, turning the country into a center for international students to study abroad. International students come to China with a strong purpose to study, they come to study in China because the rapid economic development of China has driven economic contacts between their home country and China, and they believe that China can provide a high level of international education [7]. However, due to cultural differences, geopolitical ties, language differences and environmental differences, international students coming to China often face severe problems of cross-cultural adaptation, which is a great challenge for them. As China's international education continues to open up and deepen, the scale and scope of students coming to study in China is increasing and the level has been upgraded. Opportunities and challenges coexist, and this is the opportunity for the development of international education in China as well as the challenge for Chinese international education. The intercultural adaptation problems of international students in China reflect the rapid development of China's education for international students in China from

the side and also expose the deficiencies and shortcomings in the management of international students in China in Chinese universities. By studying the relationship between the four dimensions of the psychological contract and the three dimensions of the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China, this study provides valuable reference for enhancing the cross-cultural adaptation of international students in China from the perspective of the psychological contract. This will help international students overcome the negative effects of culture shock, adapt to the educational environment, teaching atmosphere and social culture in China, motivating them to study, enabling international students to have a good study experience and successfully complete their studies in China and achieving a win-win situation for both international students and institutions, which is important for strengthening the brand of "Study in China" as well as promoting the opening up of education to the outside world.

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