The Impact of Interpersonal Communication and Acculturation on the Adaption of International Students: A Case of University Students of East African Origin in Malaysia

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Abstract

As a result of differences in academic and social elements, students who travel for study may feel strange in their new surroundings. Acculturation is the phrase Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) coined to describe the process by which people of diverse cultures adjust to life in a foreign setting. Acculturation was described as the "phenomena that result when a group of people from many cultures come into constant first-hand contact." Acculturation research continues to aid scientists in developing behavioral and social sciences to comprehend and explain racial differences, particularly to international students. The study assesses the role of interpersonal communication in the acculturation of East African university students in Malaysia. Based on a survey carried out at many private universities in Malaysia's Klang Valley, the findings indicate a significant inverse relationship between each acculturation status and interpersonal communication for the adaption of university students of East African descent. International students can adapt to a new environment through interpersonal interactions with the host society, which is crucial to their acculturation process, according to Kim's theory of intercultural adaptation from 2001. As a result, they gradually find it easier to pick up the customs, language, and regulations of modern society. This indicates that while communication is a source of socializing and social learning during the acculturation and

adaptation process, it does not certify the degree to which international students have adapted.

Key Words: East African, international students, acculturation, adaptation, interpersonal communication, Malaysia

Introduction

Any foreign student who wishes to succeed in a new environment must be able to adapt and acclimate. This ensures an active and creative existence. This consists of the internal and external balance of one's capabilities and expectations, in the proportion of one's pleasant personality, as well as their professional and social environments. According to Zakharenko, Komarova, and Nechaeva (2008), adaptation is a system that enables one to adjust to changing environmental conditions. Additionally, they said that social and psychological adaptation is when a person can adapt to the standards of a group and, conversely, may adapt a social "group's interests to a particular person inside the group. Their research on adaptation contributes to our understanding of acculturation because both are necessary for any international student trying to adjust to a foreign environment while putting forth significant effort to meet their objectives.

International students endure sociocultural adaptation as they settle into a new setting. According to Stefanenko (2003), assimilating into a new social and cultural milieu is a difficult task in the broadest sense. When one successfully integrates into a community, they feel inner fulfillment and a fullness of life,

which is what it takes to fully adapt. Contrarily, it refers to a person's active engagement in the social and cultural life of a specific group within society as a whole, which is the outer part. Acculturative pressure could be brought on by the difficulties in adjusting to the new culture. Uncertainty, anxiety, despair, marginalization and alienation, heightened mental symptoms, and identity confusion are some of the effects of the acculturative strain (Berry, 1988). High levels of acculturative stress, according to Organista & Marin (2002), raise the risk of psychiatric issues emerging. According to Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, and Loya (1997), intergenerational stress and role conflicts that a person must deal with in a new context might combine to cause acculturative stress. International university students must successfully adjust to a new culture in order to achieve their educational goals. This is demonstrated by studies conducted among these students. Some people may have trouble trying to adjust, which causes them to struggle with acculturation and fall short of their targeted objectives. According to research conducted in the United States by Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, & Baden (2005), acculturative stress is experienced by international students in the form of culture shock, confusion about role expectations, loss of social support, alienation, discrimination, and language barriers.

The ability to engage with individuals from different origins is one of the key criteria of a person's personal and professional life in today's globalized and multicultural environments (Dusi, 2014; Sinicrope, 2007). Interpersonal interaction also enables people from various social and cultural backgrounds to get to know one another and exchange knowledge and information. Kim & McKay-Semmler (2013) claim that communication is the main tool that

enables people from various backgrounds to share knowledge and establish social and cultural ties.

Problem statement

Traveling from a familiar, at-home setting where one can relate to the society to one that is unknown and under the power of someone else can cause uneasy moments in some situations; it could be fatal or it could be a heady experience, which is why the thrill of transgression exists. International students do in fact frequently struggle with a variety of concerns, such as difficulties adjusting to their new environment, difficulties with sociocultural acculturation, difficulties in the classroom, and psychological problems (Berry, 1985). The value of communication in human society has reportedly been understood for thousands of years, much longer than we can prove through documented years, according to Richmond & MacCroskey (1996). In addition to what Richmond and MacCroskey say, Singer (2006) claims that humans have evolved into social, competitive, and cooperative groups as a whole. He goes on to say that throughout time, a group's ability to endure always depends on how well they can express their own opinions and value those of others. Therefore, communication is a natural tendency for humans. From the beginning of human history to the present, this perception has never changed.

Access to people from one's own ethnicity or culture may be severely restricted, which drastically reduces the amount of help needed when trying to acclimate to new socio-cultural features of the society. The way that certain

concerns, such as hospitality and friendliness, as well as religious or ethnic customs, are addressed might in fact vary substantially depending on the society from which one comes. Acculturation may therefore be challenging, making it challenging for university students to adjust to the new environment. The concept of acculturation refers to the process that people go through when changing to a new culture.

When individuals of two or more cultural systems interact, acculturation, or the changes in cultural patterns that result, necessitates the unlearning of many long-held cultural practices and the acquisition of fresh ways of responding from the host culture. According to Berry, several studies continue to demonstrate that university students face difficulties with perceived loss, coping mechanisms, psychosocial issues, and academic hurdles (1985). Researchers are still establishing behavioral and social sciences to comprehend and explain ethnic variations thanks to the study of acculturation. This idea has been put out as a useful method to comprehend the dynamic processes that minorities experience as they attempt to fit into the culture that is dominant.

One essential daily life skill that one cannot avoid is interpersonal communication. People who live in this world will always speak with one another and exchange information through interpersonal communication. Almost every day, individuals will interact with one another at work, school, college, home, or in public settings. According to Beebe and Beebe & Redmond (1999), interpersonal communication accounts for 80–90% of people's waking time. Interpersonal communication, as defined by Hassan &

Mohamed (2000), is the process of exchanging experiences with other people. Everyone, as we are all aware, has experience with and knowledge of communication because it is a necessity that cannot be ignored. When two people interact, they each express their experience and expertise, which aids in their understanding of the exchange's significance.

It is important to research how interpersonal communication affects acculturation for the adaption of university students from East Africa in Malaysia. In order to help university students of East African descent adjust to their new lives in Malaysia, this essay investigates the connection between interpersonal communication and acculturation.

Literature review

Cultural and social adaptation of East African students in Malaysia

Studying abroad has dramatically expanded in recent years (Oosterbeek & Webbink, 2011). Thousands of foreign students studied in the United States during 1972 and 1973, and this number has risen quickly since since (Institute of International Education, 2015). Many Asian nations, including China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Malaysia, have made significant investments in their tertiary education institutions and are now competing for students with colleges in Europe and the United States. International student mobility is one of the pillars of higher education's globalization. The history of higher education may be traced back to the idea of students traveling across boundaries and pursuing knowledge in other nations (Lucas 2009). UNESCO

figures show that from roughly 2 million in 2000 to 4.6 million in 2015, the number of globally mobile students has more than doubled. By 2025, it is anticipated that this number could reach 8 million (Guruz, 2011). Asia is at the heart of the global panorama of student mobility. Asia is receiving more attention since it is the largest source of international students worldwide and because of its rising popularity as a host region for these students due to its affordability.

Globalization has had an impact on Malaysian higher education institutions, just like it has in any other nation with universities that draw foreign students. The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education set goals for the proportion of foreign students (Yusoff, 2011). This demonstrates unequivocally how crucially important overseas students are to Malaysia's higher education system. According to Nga (2009), Malaysia's higher education institutions place a strong emphasis on the internationalization of higher education in order to increase the number of foreign students who enroll by directing offshore packages through the external subdivision of university grounds and authorized franchises. Malaysia has developed into a regional center and, as a result, a steadily more popular study destination for international students drawn to studying abroad thanks to its world-class educational system and lasting worldwide standing (Lee, 1999; Nga, 2009; Pandian, 2008; Yusoff, 2011). International students come from many nations throughout the world because they can afford it (Talib, 2014; Yusoff, 2011). A increasing percentage of international students from different nations must be accommodated each year due to Malaysia's expanding university population, which also reflects

well on the country's reputation for higher education (Faleel, 2012; Mahmud, 2010; Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011; Rajab, 2013, Rajab, 2014;).

Since 1996, a steady influx of foreign students has been arriving in Malaysia (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011). Notably, the majority of them are non-native Bahasa Melayu (Malay Language) speakers, and they arrive with their native tongue. Numerous things consequently happen that may prevent overseas students from adjusting to a new culture. Their usual way of life and their ability to communicate with those of other cultures or the locals may suffer as a result of their trouble adjusting to the new culture (Manjet, 2012; Talib, 2014). As more international students enroll in Malaysian colleges, it is more important than ever to understand how they will adapt to the local culture. Talib (2014) asserts that transitioning to a new culture might be difficult and that one cannot manage it without a lot of assistance in order to comprehend the new environment. Furthermore, numerous studies have examined characteristics associated with the degree to which international students engage in sociocultural adjustment; they acknowledge that social support is a critical component of studies of adjustment in international scholars (Brisset, 2010; Chirkov, 2008; Sümer, 2008; Jung, 2007; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Cemalcilar, 2005; Li & Gasser, 2005; Lee, 2004; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). These studies looked into the USA, Australia, and a few European nations. These topics, however, have typically been researched independently of one another. In the context of Malaysia, little thought has been given to this topic. Malaysia, a developing nation in Southeast Asia, is home to more than 26 million people of varied racial and religious backgrounds. Malays (50.3

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percent), Chinese (23.8 percent), indigenous non-Malay people (11.0 percent), and Indians are the main ethnic groups (7.1 percent). The Bumiputera, sometimes known as the "son of the land" category, is made up of both Malays and indigenous non-Malay people. This ethnic division between Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras is vital to Malaysia's "authority-defined social reality" and "everyday social reality," according to the government (Shamsul, 2010). As a result, in addition to Bahasa Melayu, or the Malay language, other languages like English, Chinese, Tamil, and Punjabi are also spoken in Malaysia. Regardless of religious and cultural celebrations, clothes, languages, and identities, Malaysians appreciate and celebrate diversity in the community as a whole.

Interpersonal Communication and adaptation

The ability to engage with individuals from other origins is among the basic criteria of a person's personal and professional lives in today's world of globalization and multicultural contexts (Dusi, 2014; Sinicrope, 2007). Interpersonal communication between people from various social and cultural backgrounds also enables them to get to know one another and exchange knowledge and information. Kim and McKay-Semmler (2013) claim that communication is the main tool that enables people from various backgrounds to exchange knowledge and build cross-cultural and social bonds.

It was postulated that international students form three social interactional groups: co-national, multinational, and host national friends using the

functional model of friendship network promoted by Bochner, McLeod, and Lin (1977). Multinational friends are other international friends, co-national friends are friends from the same country of origin, and host national friends are friends from the host nation. International students typically have distinct friendships with three categories of people: close friendships with friends from the same country, social and recreational friendships with friends from other countries, and academic and professional friendships with friends from the host country. Therefore, it can be said that international students are likely to develop close friendships with their co-national friends and possibly, to some extent, with their multinational friends. However, their interactions with host country citizens are largely superficial and pragmatic.

Interpersonal communication helps to explain how individuals behave or predict their character based on psychological information, which is derived from how well you know someone and how much that person is involved in external roles. According to the social penetration theory, self-disclosure broadens and deepens as relationships expand through time (Schutz, 1966). In order to achieve their interpersonal communication goals, Ruggeiro (2000) contends that the Uses and Gratifications model is appropriate for analyzing interactive technologies in a composite communication environment. In this environment, both traditional and contemporary communication technologies are used. People who use cell phones, for example, can create their opinions about the messages they send and receive and the degree of their satisfaction depending on the fulfilling and sociological roots of their needs (McQuail, 1972).

Models of social interactions have effects on how people and activities are organized in space. This perspective is based on the theory of social penetration by Altman and Taylor (1973), which contends that as relationships progress, people reveal more of themselves, moving from relatively low levels to more intimate ones. This perspective demonstrates that people tend to expose more of themselves, especially their sentiments, as relationships progress. According to Rosenfeld (2000), access to one's inner thoughts and secrets can only be made possible via disclosure. This plays a crucial role in developing and maintaining a relationship among social participants and so forming a stronger social networking bond.

When one cannot adequately define a situation in interpersonal communication, the outsider looks for safety within the group. They use it as a source of knowledge and confirmation regarding the characteristics of the strange and new surroundings. Co-national group members are fellow-strangers since they have a same perspective on being foreign. Its members have an impact on one another's perspectives on the unfamiliar surroundings. Due to their similar conditions, the group of strangers may be trusted to give each other with accurate information on social reality (Herman, 1970). Co-national networks offer a sense of security, a sense of belonging, and a chance for a group to learn about a foreign environment and strengthen their interpersonal communication ties. The co-national network supports the preservation of identity similarity amidst discontinuity and change by meaningfully anchoring the international student to a broader group.

Students who connect with others from various nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities get new cultural knowledge and develop their communication abilities. Izumi (2010) suggested that one of the key purposes of studying abroad is to have an awareness of how other people live. Interactions between international students of various racial and cultural backgrounds in academic settings may also help them to advance their academic performance and develop relationships with other multicultural networks of students. Interacting with people from other cultural origins is a crucial skill for both public and private lives, according to Lusting & Koester's (2006) argument. According to Chickering & Reisser (1993), international students may require a variety of manners and abilities, including tolerance and communication skills, to boost their chances of developing beneficial relationships with people from various backgrounds.

Interpersonal contacts take place because of the relationships that develop between people as a result of their collaboration, according to Spitzberg & Cupach (2011). The key prerequisite for people to carry out successful interpersonal interactions is interpersonal communication competency. Individuals who are proficient in interpersonal communication can have interactions that are efficient and well-planned (Matsudair, 2008). Interpersonal contacts among people from other societies have an impact on their psychological well-being and functional fitness, according to Kim (2001). Additionally, effective interpersonal communication skills enhance the effectiveness and quality of interpersonal interactions (McGaha & Fitzpatrick, 2005).

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Acculturation of international students

University students have several difficulties as they adjust to a new culture and educational system, including language hurdles, a sense of loss, a lack of social support, and estrangement from other students. They employ coping mechanisms that either successfully lower stress to a manageable level or, in some situations, raise it in order to deal with these novel life experiences. Long-term adaptation could result in kids becoming either more tolerant of their environment or better adjusted (Berry, 1997).

Culture shock frequently includes physical and cognitive reactions to the foreign cultural surroundings in addition to emotional ones. According to a theory, a person will experience culture shock more severely the more starkly different their own culture is from their host society. These people frequently experience increased stress as a result of their effort to get over culture shock and reduce the disparities between the two competing cultures. Berry & Ataca (2002) suggested that acculturative stress is a better term to explain cultural shock because it is one of the greatest issues students experience when they enter university to begin a new academic life, despite the fact that the term "cultural shock" is recognised and commonly used.

Cultural socialization to the host culture and to the culture from which he or she originated take place when a person interacts with a foreign society. These two things seem to be separate processes that one must go through (Berry, 2005). No matter their cultural background, all university students must adapt

to a new environment. Students live alone for the first time, fusing one identity with another while pursuing new academic ambitions. Acculturation contributes to the definition of self-identity since it shows how one's sense of self is formed through identifying with a particular culture, typically the culture in which one is born and raised. To accept the various features of the new culture, one's self-identity must change when they transition from their heritage to mainstream culture. Through a series of sociocultural exchanges with the locals, the person picks up the values of the host culture.

East African students come to Malaysia to further their education. They are constantly looking for information to help them learn about and comprehend their new environment while they are abroad. It takes cultural adjustment to transition to college, which helps one better understand what is taught in class and so improve academically. Students require additional social support, assistance navigating the campus, assistance learning academic jargon, and assistance locating accessible resources. Selwyn (2009) asserts that social networking is well known for providing channels for informal and unstructured learning, therefore assisting in the acculturation process of a person, even though educationalists believe that social networking fosters interactions between learners. According to Bugeja (2006), social networking encourages critical thinking about one's learning and re-engages people with education. Users' views about specific technologies have changed as technology has advanced, which has led to the creation of new social and cultural phenomena.

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Research Methodology

The conceptual framework for this study is influenced by two theoretical perspectives: The Acculturation Scale for Asian International Students (ASAIS), created by Gu, Han, and Hu in 2006, is based on Berry's (1984, 1990), Berry's (1989), and Rubbin's (1988), Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale and measures acculturative attitudes of Asian international students. These two studies were used independently to assess the relationship between acculturation and interpersonal communication. To concentrate on particular aspects of the research topics, this study synthesizes them and makes use of the pertinent qualities of each. Understanding how participants connect with one another in their social networks as well as how their mobile phones interact with them when they move from their place of origin to Malaysia is essential for interpreting the data on information practices.

In order to determine whether interpersonal communication had an effect on acculturation for university students of East African ancestry in Malaysia, a quantitative research methodology was adopted. Purposive sampling was utilized in the study since the research sample required to meet specific criteria. Respondents had to be university students from East Africa, enrolled in any university, and actively talking with other students and other individuals. The strength of the association between interpersonal communication and acculturation was assessed using Pearson's r test, which was also utilized to illustrate how it supported the adaption of East African university students in Malaysia.

Sampling

There are 546 registered East African students in Malaysia, according to a report from Immigration that was published in Education Malaysia Global Services (2019). Israel (2003) asserts that for a population size of 546, an appropriate sample size should be set at 240 in order to attain a precision rate of 5%. (Table 3.1). The precision rate for the current investigation is still about 5%. The questionnaires were emailed in stages in order to gather the 240 needed responses. First 400 responders received emails with research questionnaires in the first round. Following the response from the participants, to which 110 answered, the researchers proceeded to stage two by physically handing out 300 study questionnaires to participants. A brief statement explaining that the poll was exclusively performed for academic purposes and that the results were confidential was given to the respondents along with the questionnaires.

Pilot test

The statistical software for the social sciences (SPSS) 20.0 was used for the analysis and data organization of the 240 respondents' responses in order to test the study's research goals. The variables were measured and the respondents' scores for each variable were analyzed using factor analysis for the study. In order to verify the validity of the questionnaires, a pilot test was conducted to determine the Cronbach's alpha value for each measurement item. The identical research sample frame yielded fifty research participants, but these fifty participants were excluded from the study's final conclusions.

In social science research settings, a dependability coefficient of 0.60 or above is regarded as acceptable, according to Bruin (2006). Because of the reduced sample size, the Cronbach's alphas for interpersonal communication and acculturation status were acquired from the respondents and were below 0.60, which was unacceptable. Second, the vast majority of responders were recent immigrants. Due to their hectic schedules, East African students who had been studying there for more than two years received the questionnaire online. One of the best possibilities for the researchers was to conduct surveys online because it allowed them to quickly and directly contact respondents who were unavailable during physical distribution. Through online questionnaire software, the questions were posted online, and the link was provided to the research participant through email and Facebook. Following the investigation, the results showed that interpersonal communication scored 0.616 and acculturation rated 0.847 on the Cronbach's Alpha scale. Due to the fact that all values were higher than the advised level of 0.60 (Bruin, 2006), we were able to acquire good reliability coefficients, which indicate good internal consistency.

Findings

In order to ascertain the role of interpersonal communication in acculturation for the adaption of university students of East African ancestry in Malaysia, the study's findings were evaluated utilizing the Pearson's r correlation analysis method. 260 university students from East Africa who were studying in Malaysia served as the study's respondents. The gender breakdown of the 260 responders was 164 men and 96 women, or 63.1 percent men and 36.9 percent

women. 46.2 percent of the total respondents were under the age of 25, 21.5 percent were between the ages of 26 and 30, and 32.3 percent were between the ages of 26 and 40. Each and every one of the respondents was under the age of 40. 60 percent of respondents are pursuing their degree, 21.5 percent are pursuing a master's, 10.4 percent are pursuing a foundation degree, and 8.1 percent are pursuing a PhD. The majority of respondents (45.0%) are in their second year of study, followed by 37.7% in their first year and 17.3% in their third year or above. 60 percent of the respondents had resided in Malaysia for two years or longer, 20 percent for one year, 19 percent for three years or longer, and 4 percent for less time.

The relationship between acculturation status and interpersonal communication for the adaptation of University students of East African origin in Malaysia

The variables of acculturation status (an independent variable) and interpersonal communication (a dependent variable) were compared using the Pearson's r correlation analysis method, and the SPSS output for the Pearson's r correlation was generated. Results revealed a substantial inverse relationship between interpersonal communication and acculturation for the adaption of East African university students in Malaysia. R for Pearson is.190. For the adaptability of university students of East African descent, the results demonstrate a statistically significant negative association between each acculturation status and interpersonal communication. This indicates that one of the variables is changing its direction.

Correlations

		Acculturation	IC total
Acculturation	Pearson Correlation	1	-.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.190
	N	255	255
IC total	Pearson Correlation	-.082	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	
	N	255	260

For the adaptation of university students from East Africa's cross-cultural experience, there is a negative association between acculturation and interpersonal communication for a number of reasons. First off, the East African students in this study came from a minority culture that places less emphasis on self-reflection or self-assumption than the host society. Second, the interpersonal communication scale, according to Rebecca Rubbin (1998), demonstrates that people occasionally communicate to improve self-learning, the process of gathering information about oneself to guide one's behavior, as well as for convenience, just because it needs to be done and someone is nearby. Contrarily, acculturation refers to a continuous process that involves

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numerous particular and generic occurrences. Therefore, interpersonal communication cannot determine one's level of acculturation when interacting with a foreign culture. Third, research participants may require more time, which varies from participant to participant, to work on interpersonal communication while assimilating into the new culture.

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The results of this study are in line with earlier research by Shen & Takeuchi (2001), which identified personality traits and social support as the two most important elements influencing mental health during acculturation. This is due to the fact that acculturation is a state of mind that progresses through stages as a result of both internal and external stimuli. In addition to the acculturation process, each individual has his or her own methods for adapting, which are influenced by a variety of elements ranging from personal traits to the larger environment. These methods can either produce positive and beneficial effects or negative and detrimental ones. Interpersonal communication is essential to one's social existence and the emergence of social interactions with others, according to Fogel (1993), Kim (2001), and Palisi & Ransford (1987). According to Kim (2001), foreigners frequently find interacting with locals in their new nation to be stressful and disturbing. Since the majority of research participants have only lived in Malaysia for a year, they are still working on their interpersonal skills, which have little to do with acculturation.

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The findings of this study are supported by a study by Arifeen (2013) about academic Sojourners, acculturation, and interpersonal communication: Path Analysis finding of his study. He discovered that a number of complicated

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factors, including language proficiency, acculturation motivation, and interpersonal potential, were negatively established in explaining engagement in interpersonal communication with the host society. Second, it demonstrates that the two most important underlying characteristics for explaining interpersonal communication were language fluency and interaction potential. This conclusion is also consistent with the findings that one of the informants' (foreign students) coping mechanisms for cross-cultural engagement is learning the local language (Tamam, 2003). However, the findings indicated that the degree of interpersonal communication engagement had a detrimental impact on how complexly an immigrant perceives the host community during the acculturation process. Acculturation, the sole basic element, had a non-direct effect on perceptual difficulties. The interpersonal communication style of East African-American university students in Malaysia failed to tackle the problem. At the same time, perceptual complexity was not directly influenced by interaction potential. The word "adaptation" is frequently used to describe the general processes of blending into the larger environment, whereas the term "acculturation" stresses learning and acquiring the characteristics of the new culture or environment (Kim, 2001). As a result, it is the all-encompassing phrase used in the intercultural communication study field the most.

Conclusion

Interpersonal exchanges that bind sojourners to the host cultural context are the foundation of the acculturation process. The development of communication skills by East African-born university students in Malaysia is not only essential to all elements of cultural adaptation but also a sign of successful acculturation. In other words, their interpersonal and group

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communication processes determine how well these international students integrate into Malaysian culture. At the same time, their personal communication styles reflect the adaptive modifications that have already occurred. Because acculturation is a continual process that one must continue to go through while in Malaysia, it is notable that the relationships between the constructions of the acculturation model are flexible rather than fixed. The difficulties of moving and settling may differ from East African student to East African student. Depending on internal and environmental conditions, the way coping mechanisms are used may also vary. Different people certainly view different challenges differently. Every immigrant has the arbitrary desire to fit in with Malaysian society. However, the various acculturation outcomes caused by the multi-layered environments separate them into several acculturative groupings.

Internal values and exterior behaviors, when combined, hasten the integration process for those university students of East African descent, leading to the development of effective interpersonal interactions. These pupils are of strong character who overcome obstacles and think that taking the initiative to make changes is effective. By studying the Bahasa language, getting involved with the community, and being open to learning more about and better understanding Malaysian culture and people, they appear to be improving their circumstances concurrently.

Those divided East African university students lack both urgent motivations and access to cultural integration, despite their subjective wish to assimilate

into Malaysian society. They do their research using the ethnic origin theory, and they are supported by friends and family. They are constrained within ethnic social networks, and the beliefs and interests they pursue on a personal level align with those of the ethnic community. This acculturation happens when people prioritize preserving their native culture and consequently engage with people from the host culture seldom.

Most of the East African students who have been integrated into Malaysian universities are among the groups of students who are most eager to study there. They identify with Malaysian culture as well, despite the fact that their society often places a lot of importance on keeping their East African ethnic language and culture alive. Their attitude has been influenced by the host culture's consuming habits, and their ideals are becoming more and more in line with popular taste. When some of them take up professions and marry locals, it is predictable that the more they stay in the nation, the more they will identify with the host culture.

When East African university students are pressured to fit in with the new culture, when the new culture restricts their participation, when they try to integrate into the new culture but are rejected, when they try to maintain their own cultural identity but fail, and when their culture views returnees with suspicion, their marginalization could worsen (Paige, 1990). Berry (1989) connected unfavorable acculturation experiences to sentiments of exclusion and segregation.

These acculturation attitudes increase the likelihood that people may perceive their intercultural encounter as dangerous. As a result, pupils who feel excluded from Malaysian culture are more likely to experience significant levels of stress. Confusion, restlessness, and disappointment are some of the traits of marginality, which Stonequist (1935) defined as being psychologically situated between two worlds.

According to the current paradigm of acculturation, it is a multifaceted and complex process in which international students retain elements of their home cultures while assimilating the attitudes, norms, values, and behaviors of the host society. Acculturation demonstrates how the cultural identities of international students are fluid and form over time. To put it another way, while they build their cultural identities, they must constantly strike a balance between preserving their heritage and simultaneously assimilating foreign practices in order to live and succeed in school in their new nation (Dutta-Bergman & Pal, 2005; Young, 2009).

In order to understand what is taught in class and hence progress academically, moving to a university in a foreign nation necessitates cultural adaptation. Students require assistance navigating the campus, learning new social skills, translating academic jargon, and locating resources. International students combine several identities while pursuing new academic goals and living independently for the first time. Students can make the transition easier by adjusting to campus life and following new norms. According to Kim's theory of intercultural adaptation from 2001, a major factor in the process of

acculturation for immigrants is interpersonal communication with the host society. They gradually absorb the laws, customs, and language of modern cultures more quickly as a result of this. In the process of acculturation and adaptation, communication serves as a source of socialization and social learning.

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