Challenges and Support Services for Asian International College Students in

America: A Series of Post-Arrival Intervention Workshops

A Project

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By

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Abstract

The majority of international students residing in the U.S. are from Asia (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017). Although these international students help enrich the American learning environment with their unique cultural perspectives and offer valuable economic contributions, their struggles are typically overlooked. Like other immigrants in the U.S., due to acculturative stressors such as language barriers and distinctions in learning and living environments, Asian international students are having a difficult time fitting into the new culture. The purpose of this project was to identify some of the challenges that Asian foreign students may encounter during their adjustment period in the U.S. while highlighting the crucial support that they need from their community colleges and universities. The project also proposed an intervention strategy to help minimize acculturative stress for Asian international students through a series of post-arrival workshops.

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Chapter I: Introduction

As an international student from Vietnam, my journey in America has been the most challenging yet rewarding experience I have gone through. Moving across the globe to study abroad in the U.S. at the age of 14, I have obtained a lot of knowledge and encountered many obstacles while trying to adjust and adapt to the new culture and environment such as being the first generation of my family to go to college. However, I am not the only foreign student in America to experience the challenges that comes with studying abroad. Among 4.6 million international students worldwide, I am one out of 1.18 million foreign students in America (Zong, Batalova, & Hallock, 2018). Approximately, 77 percent of international students residing in the U.S. are from Asia and the majority of them are enrolled in ungraduate and graduate level educational programs (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2017). Like many other first-generation college students, Asian international students have to navigate through the educational system with very minimal support from their families and faculty at schools while trying to familiarize themselves with new culture.

Although the prevalence of international students in the U.S. is increasing drastically, the challenges and concerns of this population have not been assessed thoroughly (Mori, 2000; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Unfortunately, the unique stressors and psychological concerns that these Asian international students encounter upon their arrival are instigated by acculturative stress (Berry, 1997). Like other immigrants in the U.S., these students often struggle to adjust to the new living and learning customs due to the language barriers. Not only does limited English proficiency negatively affect the way Asian international students express themselves and communicate with others, but it

also prevents them from succeeding academically. Besides the language barriers, these foreign students may have a difficult time trying to adapt to the American learning environment since the academic settings and academic integrity are valued differently in Eastern culture. Additionally, they have to deal with the social and psychological concerns that are induced by the absence of socio-emotional support from family and the new living environment. The purpose of this project was to identify the distinctive challenges that Asian international students may encounter upon their arrival in the U.S. while focusing on developing a series of post-arrival workshops in an effort to reduce acculturative stressors for Asian international students.

Problem Statement

Research suggests that Asian international college students are having a difficult time adjusting to the new living and learning environment after their arrival in the U.S. (Young, 2017). Due to the language barrier and other acculturative stressors, these students are more likely to experience socio-emotional and academic challenges compared to other foreign students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this project was to identify the challenges that Asian international students may encounter in the U.S., as well as to develop an intervention to help them transition smoothly into the new social and academic environments. A series of post-arrival workshops were designed to provide these international students with information about the American culture and other important resources on campus.

Research Questions

The project addresses the following research questions:

- How may the language barriers prevent Asian international students from transitioning successfully into the new social and academic environment?

- How can American colleges and universities provide linguistic support to Asian international students?

- How do the differences between Eastern and Western learning environments affect Asian international students' academic performance?

- What does academic integrity mean to Asian international students?

- What are the academic supports that Asian international students need to have to succeed in the Western learning environment?

- What are the social and psychological challenges that Asian international students face when adjusting to the American culture?

- How can American colleges and universities minimize the social and psychological issues for Asian international students?

Definition of Terms

For a better understanding of this project, the following terms are defined.

Academic integrity. "A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage" (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2017).

Acculturative stress. "the stressors are identified as having their source in the process of acculturation; in addition, there is often a particular set of stress behaviors which occurs during acculturation, such as lowered mental health status, feelings of

marginality, and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion." (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987, p. 493).

Asian international students. Foreign students are originally from East and South East Asian countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, etc.

Collectivism. "An emphasis on collective rather than individual action or identity" (Merriam-Webster).

Confucius' philosophy. "Knowledge and principles relating to the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius or his followers" (Merriam-Webster).

Individualism. "The conception that all values, rights, and duties originate in individuals" (Merriam-Webster).

Language barriers. A difficulty for people communicating because they speak different languages.

Assumptions

This project is anchored on the assumption that helping Asian international students transition effectively into the new culture will ensure their personal and professional achievements in America. Additionally, it is assumed that faculty and administrators are culturally competent and have an understanding of the challenges that these students have to deal with upon their arrival. Lastly, Asian international students are aware of their struggles and seek to improve their experience living in America.

Limitations

The project contains some limitations that are beyond the control of the designer. For instance, faculty and administrators may not fully understand the difficulties that Asian international students experience in the new learning environment and choose not

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to participate. Some Asian international students may also not want to attend all three workshops.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this project, the researcher solely focuses on international students from East and South East Asia who have recently started their first semester at their universities and colleges for both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Significance Statement

This project will be a significant endeavor in raising awareness of a specific student population that is typically ignored. Compared to other college students, Asian international students are more vulnerable to discrimination and changes in their environment. The majority of these students feel isolated while trying to adapt to the American culture and achieve their educational goals. Undoubtedly, their struggles are the results of the significant cultural differences between their home country and America, which include the language barrier, the distinctions in learning environments, and socio-emotional adjustments. Not only does this project intend to help faculty and administrators become more aware of Asian international students' challenges upon their arrival, but it also advocates for necessary supports in areas such as linguistics, academic, social, and psychological to improve these students' experience in America.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In recent years, the U.S. remains the most popular host country for Asian international students. Although these international students offer great economic contributions as well as diversity to any campus, they are one of the most vulnerable populations (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). The majority of their challenges potentially are caused by acculturative stress such as the language barriers, distinctions in learning, and living environment. Therefore, community colleges and universities must identify the challenges that these students may face while developing an intervention to ensure a smooth transition into the new social and academic environment.

This literature review provides an overview of the struggles that Asian international students may experience including the language barrier, academic adjustment, and social and psychological adjustments. In an effort to help Asian international college students succeed in the U.S., this project focuses on designing a series of post-arrival workshops to provide these international students with information about the American culture and important resources that they can utilize. These workshops will also help them connect with local and other international students on campus. The necessity and effectiveness of assistance programs on minimizing acculturative stress for Asian international students are examined through many studies conducted across many college campuses in America.

Linguistic Challenges

Inadequate English proficiency is the underlying cause of Asian international students' struggles after their arrival in the U.S. This section discusses the issue of

language barriers that these foreign students often encounter and ways in which several linguistic supports can help minimize these linguistic challenges.

Language Barriers

The most significant factor that determines Asian international students' social adjustment and academic success is their English language proficiency. As part of their college application, international students are required to take several English proficiency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Test System (IELTS), and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). However, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) does not require international students to be fluent in English to study in the U.S. (Department of Homeland Security, 2016). Through his studies, Sokolik (2015) concluded that the majority of preparatory schools in foreign countries were primarily focused on getting their students admitted into their preferred college through the means of exam performances rather than the development of analytical and conversational skills. Sawir (2005) also mentioned that most Asian international students focused more on practicing their writing skills rather than on improving their communicative competence.

Limited abilities in English reading, writing, listening, and speaking may reduce Asian international students' confidence in expressing their ideas in class as well as their overall academic performances. In a study done by Constantine, Kindaichi, Okazaki, Gainor, and Baden (2005), one of the interviewees reported: "I am scared to talk in classes because professors and students might not understand me. I do not want people to laugh at me" (p. 165). The concern of not being understood steers international students away from contributing to class discussions. Young (2017) mentioned that Asian

international students were more likely to encounter challenges in English-speaking environments compared to other international students. Unfortunately, these students have to spend more time than their American peers on analyzing class materials and writing essays due to the comprehension issues (Sawir, 2005). This becomes more problematic when they are unable to fully comprehend instructions and questions during an exam. Meanwhile, the language barriers also restrict Asian international students from making meaningful social connections in their new environment.

According to Campbell and Li (2008), language barriers can reduce Asian international students' sense of belonging as well as preventing them from interacting effectively with their classmates and instructors. Yeh and Inose (2010) indicated that English fluency was positively correlated to social connectedness and social satisfaction in international students. Poor English communication skills can potentially limit Asian international students from proving their potential and gaining respect from their American classmates (Fuertez, Potere, & Ramirez, 2002). Unfortunately, the social distance between international students and domestic students could become bigger as teachers and administrators overlook the importance of providing accommodations and encouragement for foreign students in the classroom (Hodne, 1997). The aforementioned studies also concluded that the lack of information about Asian international students' struggles prevent faculty and administrators from providing the proper linguistic and academic support for them to succeed in Western academics.

Linguistic Support

Even though Asian international students have spent an adequate amount of time learning English in their home countries, they are expected by their institutions to

continue improving their English competency. Andrade, Evans, and Hartshorn (2014) emphasized the importance of learning assistance programs such as tutoring, workshops, student success centers, retention offices, and linguistic support for international students. They arrived at this conclusion through their observations of institutional screening, supporting, and tracking non-native English speakers' academic performance across the U.S.

Not all faculty members are aware of personal and academic problems that Asian international students face, but those that are aware feel discouraged when working with international students due to the language barrier. Asian international students that feel conscious about their English accents are more likely to avoid participating in class discussions and group projects. This can potentially lead to professors assuming that they are not interested in learning. Professors and faculty who believe this may not recognize the connection between the language and academic barriers (Andrade, 2006). Young (2017) found that academic failure from Asian international students may be attributed to segregation and the lack of classroom involvement rather than linguistic challenges.

American educators need to understand how language barriers affect Asian foreign students' adjustment and academic success in order to develop strategies and offer the necessary linguistic assistance for these students. Hodne (1997) believed that faculty played a significant role in stimulating Asian international students' motivation to speak up in class by providing them the opportunities to talk, involving them in small group discussions, and initiating informal conversations outside of the classroom. The experience of interacting with professors and peers in different social and academic settings can improve Asian international students' communication and interpersonal

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skills (Gill, 2007). By minimizing the language barriers, community colleges and universities in America will be able to ensure a more successful transition to the new academic environment for Asian international students.

Academic Adjustment

In addition to the language barriers, the differences between Eastern and Western academic settings are another underlying cause of Asian international students' struggles. The following section also examines how the American standards of academic integrity affect these students' learning and suggests ways in which academic support can be provided in order to improve their academic performance.

Eastern and Western Academic Settings

Besides the language barriers, Asian foreign students also encounter many issues related to the distinctions between Eastern and Western learning environments (Unruh, 2015). For instance, the Eastern academic settings are heavily influenced by Confucius' philosophy which places an emphasis on the teacher's authority over the students' learning at school (Taylor, 2011). Furthermore, there is very little interaction between instructors and students as a typical lecture involves students taking notes quietly and only speaking up when allowed. Lee, Farruggia, and Brown (2013) have indicated that in the Eastern academic setting, students are trained to memorize as much information as they can through repetition. As Asian international students tend to focus on rote memorizing class materials, they are not familiar with in-class discussions and group projects, which put them at a disadvantage as compared to their American peers (Zhang & Dinh, 2017). Meanwhile, the American learning environment places an emphasis on associate learning in which the students are responsible for the way they learn.

While a collectivist culture embraces interpersonal relationships and collaboration among individuals within the society, an individualist culture emphasizes the uniqueness and independence of one's self (Markus & Kitiyama, 1991). Unlike American academic settings, the Eastern academic settings primarily focus on students' test performance instead of their creativity through self-expression. This is due to the collectivist culture that Asian internationals grew up in. Collectivist culture emphasizes the importance of humble self-expression through showing respect to others and prioritizing group interest rather than individual interest. As a consequence, Asian international students are unable to express their opinions in front of others and are instead indirect in order to perceivably maintain good interpersonal relationships (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Regardless of the activity, it is difficult for them to think critically and express their opinions. This results in problematic individualist academic settings that require directness, independence, creativity, and confidence. In addition to the differences in the learning environment, Bista (2011) mentioned that Asian international students might also struggle with the American standards of academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

Not only do Asian international students have to adapt to the new learning environment in America, but they also need to follow the academic writing practices and plagiarism policies of the universities they are attending. In general, the Cambridge dictionary (2019) defines plagiarism as an act of using another person's idea and pretending that it is one's own. According to Bertram Gallant, Binkin, and Donohue (2015), international students, who come from the Eastern academic discipline, are more likely to violate the plagiarism standards compared to their domestic counterparts.

Pecorari (2008) conducted a study on academic writing and plagiarism and was able to determine that the lack of practicing citations and weak English proficiency potentially led Asian international students to violate the academic integrity standards.

In particular, the Eastern academic standards require students to memorize important authors and poets' works and recite them in their papers as a way of showing respect (Song-Turner, 2008). Since all students and teachers know these authors and their works by heart, citing becomes unnecessary. However, in the Western academic settings, using someone's work without giving credit is frowned upon as an integrity violation (Simpson, 2016). Whether unintentionally or intentionally, students who commit academic dishonesty are at risk of failing the class or getting expelled from the university. Many researchers have advocated the significance of helping international students understand the American academic settings by offering training on plagiarism and academic honesty policies (Thompson, Bagby, Sulak, Sheets, & Trepinski, 2017).

Academic Support

These academic challenges that Asian international students encounter urge educational researchers and administrators to determine and establish the necessary support to help reorient these students into the American ways of learning. Within the classroom, Tucker (2003) suggested that in order to provide the appropriate support for Asian international students, instructors and administrators must first be mindful of the cultural differences and have the basic knowledge of the Eastern ways of transferring information. Secondly, he highlighted that it was essential for instructors to develop different teaching methods to effectively induce learning for international students. Communicating with these students about assignment requirements and expectations of

academic integrity would ensure them a better transition into the new learning environment. Another way for educators and administrators to accommodate Asian international students is to provide academic related workshops such as plagiarism and academic honesty workshops. Of the students who participated in these workshops, 63% strongly agreed that their perception of academic integrity standards had immensely improved (Thompson et al., 2017). These students also reported to gain a better understanding of paraphrasing and citing.

Outside of the classroom, Asian international students often rely on academic advisors to navigate through their undergraduate and graduate career. Wei, Tsai, Chao, Du, and Lin (2012) concluded that academic advising played an essential role in improving international students' learning experiences as well as their professional development. In particular, on-campus academic advising serves as a guidance for Asian international students to select their major, complete their degree requirements, and obtain related employment experience upon their graduation (Zhang & Dinh, 2017). Since not every community college and university require their students to meet with academic advisors during their first semester, Saha (2018) suggested that academic advising should be mandated for all undergraduate students and especially for international students. Her study also suggests that academic advisors need to keep an open mind when working with Asian international students since they come from a very different cultural background and educational system compared to native students. Not only does academic advising assist international students with selecting a major of interest and career path, but it also improves their self-knowledge and self-acceptance. When academic advisors form a supportive relationship with Asian international

students, they can help the students become more confident in forming meaningful social interactions with other students and faculty members on campus.

Social and Psychological Adjustment

Beside the language barriers and academic adjustments, Asian international students also have to deal with the social and psychological challenges due to cultural shock and homesickness. This section emphasizes the importance of providing social support and counseling services to Asian international students during their journey in the U.S.

Social Challenges

Due to acculturative stress, Asian international students are more susceptible to experience social isolation that can eventually lead to other mental health issues. For instance, separation from support systems at home and lack of social connections in their new environment could cause these students to feel isolated, depressed, and anxious during the adjustment period (Dao, Lee, & Chang, 2007). Growing up in a Collectivist culture where family relation is highly valued, Asian international students are more reliant on social interaction with their family members as a way to create a sense of belonging in the new environment as well as validating their self-identity and self-esteem. The foundation of Asian international students' social support also varies based on the length of their residency in the U.S. In the beginning of their stay, contact with their family and friends from home are considered to be quite significant for their adjustment and psychological wellbeing. As they spend more time in the U.S., Asian international students start to rely on their newly established social relationships with friends, faculty members, and host families (Bhochhibhoya, Dong, & Branscum, 2017).

Aside from social interactions with their families and friends from home, communications with their peers on campus are also deemed to be important to induce a sense of belonging and increase social interest (Zerengok, Guzel, & Ozbey, 2017). However, social isolation is also a result of potential prejudice from their American classmates. Many American students may view themselves as superior to Asian international students and refuse to learn about these students' culture (Will, 2016). On the other hand, Sato and Hodge (2009) mentioned that Asian international students may avoid interacting with American peers because of their limited English proficiency and lack of knowledge about the American culture. Consequently, these students may start to feel marginalized and develop maladaptive behaviors such as self-doubt and social avoidance during their adjustment period.

Psychological Challenges

Although the majority of Asian international students are able to effectively adapt to the new learning and living environment, several studies have found that many international students display psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment issues due to maladaptive perfectionism and perceived discrimination (Huang & Mussap, 2018). In particular, maladaptive perfectionism is a common issue in the Asian international student population which occurs when these students begin to associate their poor academic performance with personal failures. By conducting a study on acculturative stress and maladaptive perfectionism in Chinese international students in the U.S., Wei et al. (2007) suggest that the more pressure these students put on themselves to succeed, the more at risk they are for depression and other mental health issues if they fail to meet their own expectations. They may also feel depressed and

discriminated against due to an unfamiliar environment and low level of self-worth. Furthermore, as Asian international students experience homesickness, they are more likely to view themselves as victims of prejudice and discrimination compared to their European counterparts (Wei, Wong, Tsai, Liu, & Zhu, 2014). These challenges prevent international students from effectively adapting to the new environment. They may feel as if they are left to suffer by themselves due to not knowing about available resources on campus.

Unfortunately, even with adequate information about on-campus resources, Asian international students can still avoid seeking professional help because of the stigma that their culture holds against mental health (Chen & Lewis, 2011). Particularly, utilizing counseling and psychological services is perceived as unnecessary and shameful in various Asian countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea. Under the influence of Confucian philosophy in Eastern culture, Asian international students are taught to embrace the idea of overcoming difficulties without seeking for assistance from others (Taylor, 2011). Therefore, these students may find it difficult to disclose their state of psychological wellbeing to their counselors. As a result, they are more susceptible to mental health issues and may terminate their counseling sessions early unlike domestic students (Young, 2017). By understanding the social and psychological complications that Asian international students encounter, faculty members and other students on campus will be able to provide the appropriate support to help these students adjust more effectively to American culture.

Social Support and Counseling Services

Many studies have found that social support is the most effective coping strategy to reduce Asian international students' acculturative and psychological stress (Lashari, Kaur, & Awang-Hashim, 2018). Jackson, Ray, and Bybell (2013) also recommended American institutions to address these issues by providing them with information regarding relevant resources on campus and effective scoping strategies. Some of the resources on campus that these students can utilize are outreach programs such as mentoring program, tutoring services, and international student associations. Not only do these programs assist international students with academic problems, but they also help create a sense of community and belonging. Through involvement in social activities on campus, Asian international students can further improve their social experience as well as their psychological and physical wellbeing (Zerengok et al., 2017). Other opportunities such as engaging in social interaction with their peers also helps develop their English proficiency and social skills outside of the classroom environment. As a result, Asian international students will be able to deal with acculturative stress more effectively while focusing on their academic goals.

By exploring the correlation between mental wellbeing and academic performance, American educational institutions should be compelled to provide and advocate for psychological counseling services on campus. Psychological support services like individual and group counseling sessions are found to be effective in reducing Asian international students' psychological stress. However, Dipeo, Kang, and Cooper (2007) believed that group counseling is more beneficial for international students than individual counseling. Not only do these group counseling sessions help form a support group, but they also enhance their sense of well-being and belonging.

Another resource that Asian international students can rely on when facing psychological problems is their professors. Through their research on foreign students' interactions with faculty members, Hyun, Quinn, Madon, and Lustig (2007) indicated that international students tended to discuss about their personal issues to their professors rather than family and friends due to the assumption that people from home would not be able to understand their struggles in America. This study's findings are supported by the Confucian philosophy where educational professions are highly treasured and respected by Eastern society (Taylor, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative for faculty members to be aware of their influence on Asian international students' mindset when it comes to issues related to mental health. With adequate knowledge on this population and available resources, they can help bridge the gap between Asian international students and counselors on campus through a referral process.

Summary

The purpose of this project was to examine the unique challenges that Asian international college students encounter in America. Upon their arrival in the U.S., these students have to deal with several challenges such as the language barriers, the differences between Eastern and Western societies, and social and psychological issues. In particular, the language barriers may prevent these students from freely expressing themselves in and outside of the classroom. Limited English proficiency may lead to low academic performance and prevent Asian international students from adjusting and adapting to the new culture. Furthermore, separation from their families and friends and the lack of social support from the new environment can negatively affect their holistic well-being. This can potentially result in Asian international students' low retention and

graduation rates. Many aforementioned studies have confirmed the effectiveness of several support services such as linguistic, academic, social, and psychological counseling services on minimizing these students' acculturative stress and improving academic performance. Although the majority of American community colleges and universities have these support services on campus, they may fail to encourage Asian international students to utilize them. In an effort to increase international students' usage for these services, American higher institutions can develop and provide informational workshops for these students during their first semester. The following chapter will discuss the project's methodology including the participants, theoretical rationale, and an outline of an intervention.

Chapter III: Methodology

As the literature review has revealed, many Asian international students have encountered numerous challenges upon their arrival in the United States. While the language barrier creates limits for students that prevent them from successfully adjusting to the new living environment, the differences between Western and Eastern academic settings also prevents them from achieving their academic goals. Furthermore, the lack of socio-emotional support from family and friends can potentially cause harm to Asian international students' mental wellbeing. With a consideration towards foreign students' struggles, many community colleges and universities in the U.S. have dedicated more effort in creating pre-arrival and post-arrival workshops to help these students transition into their new environment. The purpose of this project was to develop an intervention for Asian international students after their arrival in America. The post-arrival workshop will primarily focus on informing these students about the academic and socio-emotional challenges that they may encounter in and outside of the classroom while also providing students with resources and strategies on how to deal with them effectively.

Participants

The post-arrival workshops are designed to support international students from Asia who have recently started their first semester in colleges and universities for both undergraduate and graduate levels. The international student office members will facilitate the workshops with assistance from faculty and other current international students on campus. Since there are no specific selection criteria for participants, all international students are welcome to partake in the series of post-arrival workshops.

Theoretical Rationale

According to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 77 percent of international students in the country are from Asia (Student and Exchange Visitor Program, 2017). Although these foreign students are making a positive impact on the U.S. economy and its diversity, their struggles are often overlooked (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Studies mentioned in the literature review have suggested that the majority of Asian international students experience difficulty when adapting to the American culture. Additionally, the more academic challenges these students encounter, the lower their retention and graduation rates become (Fass-Holmes, 2016). Even with adequate preparation prior to their arrival, unexpected challenges stemmed from having the language barriers, the differences in academic settings, and the lack of socio-emotional support can still cause these students to feel isolated in the new environment and prevent them from establishing themselves in America.

By examining how these challenges are correlated to academic performance and psychological wellbeing of Asian international students, a series of three post-arrival workshops are developed to help them gain more insights about the American culture while offering them the necessary support to overcome the acculturative stress during the first few months of their stay. In particular, one of the three workshops will also provide information about the differences between Eastern and Western learning environments as well as the American standards of academic integrity. The intervention workshop is anchored on the belief that by providing adequate information about the host country's culture and offering the necessary support, Asian international students will be ensured of

a smooth transition into their new environment and reduce acculturative stress for Asian international students.

Outline of Post-Arrival Intervention

A total of three post-arrival workshops will be conducted during the first two months of school. These workshops will be taught and facilitated by professional staff from the international student office. Administrators may also encourage current Asian international students to assist with the workshops and share their experiences with new incoming foreign students. Each workshop, which is 90 minutes long, will be dedicated to informing these students about a specific challenge that they may encounter and providing them with strategies and resources. An outline of the workshop series is listed below.

- o Workshop #1: The Language Barriers
- o Workshop #2: Western Academic Settings and Academic Integrity
- o Workshop #3: Social and Psychological Support on Campus

Evaluation Plan

To best assess the evaluation of the post-arrival workshops, pre- and post-workshop surveys (see Appendices A and B) will be sent out to all the participants in the beginning and at the end of the workshop series. The survey will assess how the workshops impacted their belongingness to the campus, academic performance, and overall mental wellbeing.

Chapter IV: Post-Arrival Workshop Series

Studies in the literature review have suggested that after their arrival in the U.S., many Asian international students inevitably encounter numerous challenges stemmed from the language barriers and the differences between Eastern and Western learning and living environments. In an effort to minimize the challenges mentioned above, this project focuses on creating an intervention for international students including those from Asia during the first few months of their journey. The series of three post-arrival workshops will help these students recognize the academic and socio-emotional challenges that they may encounter in and outside of the classroom while also providing students with resources and strategies on how to deal with them effectively.

Workshop Objectives

The objectives of the workshop series are aimed to develop international students' awareness of communication issues, academic challenges, social and psychological implications caused by the language barriers, and the distinctions in the new living and learning environments. In addition to identifying all the challenges these students may encounter, the workshop series will provide them with an ongoing support group and resources on campus. By attending all of the three workshops, these international students will be able to share their concerns and learn from others' experiences.

Logistics

A total of three post-arrival workshops will be conducted during the first two months of the semester or quarter. An email about the workshop and sign-up sheet will be sent out to all incoming international students a month prior to the first day of instruction. These workshops will be facilitated by professional staff from the international student

office. Each workshop will be 90 minutes long. Depending on the participants'

preference, the workshop can be scheduled on Friday and limited from 20-40 students per

workshop. Administrators may also encourage current Asian international students to

assist with the workshops and share their experiences with new incoming foreign

students.

Workshop 1: The Language Barrier (Lesson Plan)

Topic: The Language Barrier

Duration: 90 minutes

Learning Outcomes: Through this workshop, international students will be able to

recognize how the language barriers may affect their social adjustment and academic

performance during the first semester. The workshop will also provide these students

with strategies as well as on-campus resources such as mentoring and writing services.

Most importantly, participants will have an opportunity to meet and talk to returning

international students to learn from their experience and establish a support group.

Materials and guest speakers:

- Pre-workshop survey (see Appendix A)

- Video on *What You Did Not Know About Language Barriers* by Rozanne
  Pomerantz which can be found here

- A panel of returning international students to discuss and share about their
  personal experiences

1. PRE-WORKSHOP SURVEY (10 minutes):

- Before getting started with the workshop, participants will have 10 minutes to
  complete a survey.

2. ICE-BREAKER (10 minutes)

   - After the facilitators introduce themselves, participants will be asked to pair up with one another.

   - Participants will have about 5 minutes to talk to their partner. A set of questions is provided to guide their conversation.

        o What is your name?

        o Where are you from?

        o How many languages do you speak?

        o What do you hope to gain from today's workshop?

   - Facilitators will conclude the activity after 5 minutes and ask some participants to share their conversation to the group if they are comfortable.

3. INTRODUCTION (20 minutes):

   - Participants watch *What You Did Not Know About Language Barriers* by Rozanne Pomerantz

   - After watching the video, participants and the international student panel will discuss the questions:

        o What is the language barrier?

        o How has the language barrier affected your daily conversation with others?

   - Definition of *language barrier:* A barrier or difficulty communicating between people who do not speak a common language

4. SCENARIOS ON HOW THE LANGUAGE BARRIER AFFECTS COMMUNICATION (30 minutes):

- With their icebreaker partner, participants will be asked to read each scenario and discuss how they would overcome the situation.

  o Scenario #1: As an ESL learner, you are having a hard time keeping up with all of the reading assignments for the class.

  o Scenario #2: Your friend, who is an international student, has a question about his or her grade but refuses to talk to the instructor about it due to his or her limited English proficiency.

  o Scenario #3: You are struggling to articulate yourself in a group project.

5. RESOURCES ON CAMPUS (10 minutes):

   - Facilitator provides participants with information on campus resources.

     o Mentoring and Tutoring services

     o Writing center

     o International student associations and organizations on campus

6. REFLECTION (10 minutes):

   - Facilitator will provide handouts on available campus resources and ask each participant to share one tip or strategy they learned from today's workshop.

Workshop 2: Western Academic Settings and Academic Integrity (Lesson Plan)

Topic: Western Academic Settings and Academic Integrity

Duration: 90 minutes

Learning Outcomes: The workshop on Western academic settings and academic integrity will be conducted two to three weeks after the first workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to inform international students about the characteristics and expectations in an American classroom. In particular, these students will be able to understand what academic integrity means at a U.S. higher institution and learn how to avoid plagiarism. At the end of this workshop, international students will also receive information on tutoring services and other student success centers on campus.

Materials and guest speakers:

- Resource handouts (see Appendix C)

- Faculty members from the English department and staff from tutoring centers on campus

1. ICE-BREAKER (10 minutes):

- Facilitator will have the ice-breaker question ready on board: "How is your week going?"

- Participants will take turns to say one word to describe their week.

2. INTRODUCTION (10 minutes):

- Facilitators introduce themselves and the faculty panel. Then, they will explain the agenda and learning outcomes of the workshop to participants.

3. COMPARING WESTERN AND EASTERN EDUCATION SYSTEMS (30 minutes):

- Participants will be divided into pairs for this activity. Method of grouping is to be determined by facilitators.

- With a partner, participants will be asked to say *yes* or *no* to a statement to determine whether teaching method belongs to American or Asian education systems. They will also explain their responses to understand the differences between two academic environments. The statements are adapted from Wong (2004)'s study on Asian international students' learning styles.
    - o   Encouragement of discussion and participation
    - o   Encouragement of teaching to the test
    - o   Value for student creativity and individuality
    - o   Importance of extracurricular activities
    - o   Emphasis on notetaking
    - o   Professor availability
    - o   Independent research and study
    - o   Group work

- Facilitators will conclude this activity by asking participants about their thoughts on the differences between the American academic settings and their perspective countries' learning environment.

- Facilitators and faculty members will help participants come up with tips and strategies to effectively adapt to the new education system.

4. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (30 minutes):

- Definition of *academic integrity*: "A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage" (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2017).

- Participants will respond to the question "What does academic integrity or academic honestly mean to you?"
- Facilitators will then present behaviors that are considered as academic dishonesty and inform the students about the specific school's academic integrity policy and procedures for violation.
  - Definition of *plagiarism*: An act of using another person's idea and pretending that it is one's own.
- Example of academic integrity policy on a university's website can be found here.
- Faculty and staff members will also clarify to the students their role in maintaining academic integrity while providing tips and strategies to help them avoid academic dishonesty.
  - Preventing plagiarism when writing: https://www.plagiarism.org/article/preventing-plagiarism-when-writing
  - Citing your paper in MLA and APA format: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

5. REFLECTION (10 minutes):
- Facilitators will ask participants to write down one thing they learned about academic integrity and one strategy they can use to minimize the differences between the American academic settings and their home country's academic settings.

Workshop 3: Social and Psychological Support on Campus (Lesson Plan)

Topic: Social and Psychological Support on Campus

Duration: 90 minutes

Learning Outcomes: Not only do Asian international students experience difficulty in adjusting in the new academic environment, but they also struggle to adapt to the new culture. This workshop focuses on identifying the social and psychological implications that international students may encounter after their arrival in the U.S. These students will recognize the stigma surrounding mental health issues and the negative impact of judgement on help-seeking behaviors. Additionally, they will learn about their personal strengths through a short activity towards the end of the workshop. Lastly, they will gain strategies and resources (see Appendix D) on campus to help them reduce their acculturative stress through different steps of transition.

Materials and guest speakers:

- Resource handouts

- Post-workshop survey (see Appendix B)

- Counselors from the Counseling and Psychological Services on campus

1. INTRODUCTION (10 minutes):

   - Participants will briefly introduce themselves (Name, major, home country).

   - Facilitators introduce themselves and faculty panel. Then, they will explain the agenda and learning outcomes of the workshop to participants.

2. SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES (25 minutes):

- Facilitator will ask participants to pair up with one another for this activity (facilitator may come up with a quick activity to help participants get in their pair).

- Each pair will have 5-10 minutes to discuss about their challenges when trying to adjust to the new social settings.

- Participants will then share their challenges, discuss how these implications affect their mental well-being, and what they have done to overcome them. Facilitator will write the identified social and psychological adjustment challenges on the board for later group discussion.

3. STIGMAS AGAINST MENTAL HEALTH (20 minutes):

- Participants will be asked to think about these questions below about mental health.

    a) What does mental health mean to you?

    b) What are your thoughts on seeking help for your mental wellbeing?

    c) What stigmas that your culture may have against mental illness?

- Facilitator will have a discussion with the whole group while informing them about the importance of mental health during the adjustment period.

    o Many international students display psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment issues (Huang & Mussap, 2018).

    o As Asian international students experience homesickness, they are more likely to view themselves as victims of prejudice and discrimination compared to their European counterparts (Wei, Wong, Tsai, Liu, & Zhu, 2014).

       o   There is a correlation between mental wellbeing and academic performance.

4. IDENTIFY YOUR STRENGTH (20 minutes):

This activity is adapted from the Strength workshops, which were created and developed by Peer Connections at San Jose State University using the Myers-Briggs theory of positive psychology.

-   Participants will identify their personal strength from 34 themes of strength organized into 4 categories including executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking.

-   Then, they will be asked to share with the group how they have relied on a strength to overcome a struggle during their adjustment period in the U.S.

-   Facilitator can encourage participants to think of their personal strength when they encounter challenges stemmed from acculturation.

5. INFORMATION ABOUT ON-CAMPUS SUPPORT (5 minutes):

-   Besides using the last few minutes to answer remaining questions from the participants, facilitator will provide them with resource handouts about social events and mental health services on campus.

6. POST-WORKSHOP SURVEY (10 minutes):

-   Facilitator will hand out the post survey for participants to complete at the end of this workshop.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Like other foreign students all over the world, Asian international students' journey in the U.S. entails many thrilling experiences that help them unravel their curiosity, define who they want to become, and reach their fullest potentials. Although these international students foster diversity, enrich the American learning environment, and create valuable economic contribution, research has suggested that they are having a difficult time adjusting to the new living and learning environment after their arrival in the U.S. (Young, 2017). Due to acculturative stressors such as the language barriers and distinctions in learning and living environments, Asian international students are more likely to experience socio-emotional and academic challenges compared to other foreign students.

In particular, the literature review has revealed that not only do the language barriers prevent Asian international students from successfully adjusting to the new culture, but they also negatively affect their academic performance and mental well-being. Unfortunately, university administrators and faculty may not be aware that international students' English proficiency can decrease their confidence and contribution in the classroom. Many studies have also identified that limited English proficiency may negatively affect Asian international students' sense of belonging as well as preventing them from making meaningful social connections with their peers. Besides the language barriers, the differences between Eastern and Western academic environments are another underlying cause of Asian international students' struggles. These distinctions can range from how information is delivered inside the classroom to how students' creativity and individuality are valued according to the American academic standards. In addition to the language barriers and differences in learning environments, research has

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shown that Asian international students are more prone to experience social isolation that can eventually lead to other mental health issues. Although the majority of international students successfully adapt to the new culture as time passes, other students may encounter psychological distress such as anxiety, depression, and adjustment issues due to maladaptive perfectionism and racial discrimination (Huang & Mussap, 2018). The challenges presented in the literature have emphasized the importance of providing appropriate interventions as well as necessary ongoing support to ensure a better transition for services for Asian international students in the U.S.

In an effort to minimize the struggles that many foreign students have encountered, this project proposed a series of post-arrival workshops for Asian international graduate and undergraduate students at San Jose State University. Currently, there are approximately 4,280 international undergraduate and graduate students attending the university, which takes up 12% of the student body (San Jose State University, 2019). The workshop series is aimed to develop international students' knowledge on communication issues, academic challenges, and social and psychological implications that they may encounter during the first few months after their arrival. By helping Asian international students transition effectively into the new culture, they will have a better chance to achieve their academic and professional goals.

Conclusions

Upon the review of the challenges that Asian international students face, the researcher believes that it is extremely important for universities and community colleges in the U.S. to pay more attention to this population and provide the necessary support for their holistic development. Offering a series of post-arrival workshops is the very first

step that any university and college can take to welcome international students to their campus while informing them early on about some of the acculturative issues that they may experience. Through these workshops, Asian international students will be able to build upon their knowledge of the American culture as well as to prepare themselves with more adequate information on resources and strategies. Furthermore, the intervention offers these students a support group that consists of other international students, faculty, and administrators. Not only does this help create a sense of belongingness for Asian international students, but it also motivates them to be more confident in contributing their cultural perspectives in and outside of the classroom. For future study, the researcher may examine the effectiveness of these workshops and further explore other interventions and resources for Asian international students.

Recommendations

The proposed series of post-arrival workshops may not be the only intervention that universities and colleges can provide to international students to lessen acculturative stress. Another intervention such as online pre-arrival workshops may be offered to these students before their journey to America. Faculty and staff can also develop an international student handbook to keep Asian foreign students informed about acculturative challenges and available resources on and off campus. To enhance their sense of belongingness on campus, the international student office may host cultural events throughout the semester for international students to celebrate and share the uniqueness of their cultures with other students.

In addition to all the supports mentioned in the previous chapters, other types of services such as financial and immigration support still need to be assessed and

established in order to fully assist international students. Even though the majority of universities and community colleges have an international student office to assist students, a lot can still be done to relieve the pressure of maintaining immigration requirements that often distracts them from their schoolwork. For instance, colleges and universities may want to provide additional support to international students on immigration procedures that are related to on-campus employment during their college career as well as off-campus employment after their graduation. Whether these students decide to stay in the U.S. or move back home to start their career, to ensure these students' success after graduation, the international student office shall offer career counseling as a way to help them determine their career pathways and prepare them for future employment.

In order to determine whether international students need additional assistance from the university, the international student office may administer an online survey in the beginning of each semester. Results from the survey will help faculty and administrators define the need and establish suitable interventions for the benefits of their international student population. Lastly, it is very critical for all community colleges and universities in the U.S. to continue on endorsing diversity and inclusion in an effort to protect Asian and other international students against prejudice and discrimination.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-Workshop Survey

The pre-workshop survey is designed to provide us a better understanding of your background and experiences as an international student. Please take your time to complete this anonymous survey and turn it in to the facilitator once you are done!

1. **How do you rate your awareness of language barriers as a non-native English speaker?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

2. **How do you rate your knowledge on the American academic environment in the classroom (i.e.. group discussions, project, writing assignments, etc.)?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

3. **How do you rate your knowledge on the American standards of academic integrity)?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

4. **How do you rate your awareness on the concept of mental wellbeing and mental illness?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

5. **How effective are your coping strategies in minimizing acculturative challenges?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

Appendix B: Post-Workshop Survey

The post-workshop survey is designed to help us assess the quality and effectiveness of our workshops. Your responses are very important to us. Please take your time to complete this anonymous survey and turn it in to the facilitator at the end of the workshop!

1. **After attending the 1st workshop, how do you rate your awareness on the language barriers as a non-native English speaker?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

2. **After attending the 2nd workshop, how do you rate your knowledge on the American academic environment (i.e.. academic integrity)?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

3. **After attending the 3rd workshop, how do you rate your awareness on the concepts of mental wellbeing and mental illness?**

1	2	3	4
Inadequate	Moderate	Good	Excellent

4. **By attending all three workshops, I have gained more strategies on how to reduce the language barriers, adapt to the new academic environment, and take care of my mental health.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. **By attending all three workshops, I have learned more about resources on campus.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. **I feel more confident asking other students and faculty on campus for assistance.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

7. **I feel connected to other participants I have met throughout the workshop and I feel like I belong to a community on campus.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

8. **I would recommend these workshops to other international students on campus.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

Thank you for your participation!

Appendix C: Academic Support Resources Handout

- **Academic Support Resources**

  https://www.sjsu.edu/advising/student_resources/academic_resources/

- **Academic Advising**

  http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/

- **Peer Connections (Student Service Center 600)**

  http://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/

  Appointment Hours (SSC600): M-W: 9am-5pm, R: 9am-4pm, F: 9am-3pm

  Drop-in Hours (Clark Hall, 1st floor): M-W: 10am-5pm, R: 10am-4pm

  Drop-in/Appointments (Spartan Hub, Village B): M-W: 5pm-8pm

  - o Drop-in tutoring/ Tutoring Appointments
  - o Mentoring
  - o Supplemental Instruction Leaders

- **Writing Center**

  Appointment Hours (Library, 2nd floor): M-Th: 10am – 7pm, F: 10am-3pm

  Drop-in Hours (Clark Hall 126): M-Th: 10am-3pm

  Phone: (408) 924-2308

  writingcenter@sjsu.edu

- **Academic Integrity**

  http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/facultyandstaff/Academic_Integrity/index.ht

ml

- **Preventing plagiarism when writing**

  https://www.plagiarism.org/article/preventing-plagiarism-when-writing

- **Citing your paper in MLA and APA format**

  https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

Appendix D: Social and Psychological Support Resources Handout

- **Student organizations**

    http://www.sjsu.edu/getinvolved/

    http://www.sjsu.edu/getinvolved/recognized-student-orgs/

- **International Student and Scholar Services**

    http://www.sjsu.edu/isss/

    Phone: (408) 924-5920

    Email: international-office@sjsu.edu

- **Peer Connections Mentoring Services**

    https://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/programs/mentoring/index.html

    Student Services Center 600

    M-W: 9am-5pm, R: 9am-4pm, F: 9am-3pm

    Phone: (408) 924-2587

    Email: peerconnections@sjsu.edu

- **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

    https://www.sjsu.edu/counseling/

    Student Wellness Center

    Phone: (408) 924-5910

    Email: counseling.services@sjsu.edu

- **CAPS Life Skills Workshops**

    http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling/students/Workshops/index.html