THE IMPACT OF ADJUSTMENT, ENGAGEMENT AND HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ACADEMIC WELL-BEING OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WHO STUDY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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Abstract

To seek evidence of the correlation between college adjustment (CA), academic engagement (AE), help-seeking behaviour (HSB) and students' academic well-being (AW), quantitative research was conducted at STIE Triatma Mulya Stenden, Bali, Indonesia, involving 235 grand tour students from NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences of Dutch and German nationalities who took minors for ten weeks. Analysis with Structural Equation Model shows that the model provided acceptable fit with CFI (0.992 > 0.9) and RMSEA (0.031 < 0.06). All parameter estimates were at 0.05 significant level ($z > 2.58$). With the note "minimum was achieved" and the value of *df* 14 (positive two digit numbers) the chi-square value is acceptable. Detailed findings are 1) with the regression coefficient value (β) = 0.286, *p*-value = 0.001 and *cr*-value of less than 3.321, CA has a significant effect on AE; 2) with β = -0.436, p = 0.031 and $cr < -2.152$, AE has a significant effect on HSB; 3) with β = 0.205, p = 0.125 and $cr < -1.533$, CA has no significant effect on HSB; 4) with β = 0.020, p = 0.728 and $cr < 3.372$, HSB does not have a significant effect on AW; 5) with β = 0.379, p = *** and $cr < 3.372$, AE has a significant effect on AW; 6) with β = 0.508, p = 0.001 and CR < 5879, CA has a significant effect on AW. To conclude, students' short stay, international education standard, the locals' hospitality and English language competency enable students to adapt and become academically engaged. If issues persist, they are mostly related to their inability to resist invitations to socialize during school days. Regrettably, the short stay discourages the students from seeking help when facing problems.

Keywords: College adjustment, academic engagement, help-seeking behaviour, academic well-being.

1. Introduction

Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the *purpose*, *functions* or *delivery* of higher education at the institutional and national levels" (Knight, 2008). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported that in 2016, within its members, 35 countries from North and South America to Europe and Asia Pacific, 3.5 million are international students (OECD, 2018), and 55% enrolled in bachelor's degree. Out of that number 1.9 (55%) are students from Asia studying mostly in three developed countries i.e. Australia (15%), the UK (11%) and the USA (38%). On the contrary, only 845.000 European students are recorded studying abroad mostly in other European countries and only 24% studies in OECD countries. consequently, most research was carried out to this population and little was done to students from developed countries who study in developing countries.

The question is raised as to whether students from developed countries who study in developing countries encounter the same challenges. As mentioned by Yeoh, Le, and Doan (2013), students from developing countries face academic issues due to language barriers and different educational system. These students also are confronted with non-academic issues i.e. psychological, social and financial. The first and foremost psychological difficulty is culture shock – "a negative state generated by being in an unfamiliar cultural environment" (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Physical issues can be caused by fatigue, lack of or imbalanced nutritious meals, lack of exercises, and other health-related risk-taking behaviour (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2003). Social issues, rooted from the lack of language proficiency, cultural differences and heavy load studies, create students' reluctance to socialize (Wiles, 2017). Financial issue persists because of high tuition fees, exchange rates discrepancies (Banjong, 2015), fundamental welfare issues due to limited work rights (Alghamdi & Otte, 2016), and inaccessibility to health care and support services. This study is conducted to seek the answer to the afore-mentioned question.

2. Grand tour students and their issues

NHL Stenden University of Applied Sciences (NHL SUAS) with the headquarter in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands and its branches in Thailand, Indonesia, Qatar, South Africa, and China is one of the largest institutions of higher education in the Netherlands. 2.900 out of over 24,000 enrolees are international students from 90 different citizenships (Stenden University, 2017). With that, the institution is committed to keep its education International. The primary focus is the Grant Tour (GT) program. Almost 100 minor programmes are offered all over campus sites including STIE Triatma Mulya Stenden (STMS) Bali, Indonesia – the venue of this research, which offers namely Entrepreneurship in Action, Event Management, Marketing and Management in Asia, Spa Business Strategy, Media Tourism Innovation and Mindfulness Leadership. STMS receives 100 – 120 GT students per module (10 weeks).

As most GT students have never travelled in developing countries before, two sessions of cultural orientations are conducted prior to the departure and right after the arrival to ensure the students adjust well. In her research, Wiles (2017) recorded that in every module there are always incidents related to various health issues, (traffic) accidents, thefts and street robberies, social issues like the accessibility of Bali night lives and the incapability to resist friends' invitation to go out during the school days. Psychological issues range from homesickness, loneliness, stress, depression, frustration, anger, and many other. Financial issues are not detected until in the later phase, where money has been spent for nightlife and travels. This results in the decrease of the students' engagement in the educational activities. Subsequently, this also leads to the students' low academic well-being and conversely to the achievement. Academic issues are related to module assignments which require students to work in groups. The dynamic of the groups normally dwindling around mid-module. Nothing recorded as an indication of academic issues due to the lack of English competency and the difference between the educational system implemented in NHL Stenden and STMS. Unfortunately, it is recorded that the number of the students failing the units in the module is 10-20%; big enough to draw a conclusion that there is something not right with the students' well-being and that some measures need to be done in order to reduce the number. Focus is directed towards students' ability to adjust the new (academic) environment, students' engagement and initiative to seek help when facing challenges.

3. Well-being, adjustment to college, academic engagement, and help-seeking behaviour

From qualitative research employing N-Vivo data analysis, Wiles (2017) constructed a definition of academic well-being i.e. "the balance between sources owned and students' academic achievement, and when throughout their time in the institution, students are healthy physically and psychologically, have good social relationships with the academic staff, friends and the people where they live, and have future visions when there is assistance and support from the staff". Engagement is defined as an activity that results in an increase or growth carried out by an individual by actively allocating his attention in his environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) and the initiation of the efforts, actions and persistence of students in school assignments and their emotional state during the learning process (Skinner, Kinderman, & Furrer, 2009). Adjustment includes the organization of personalities capable of directing students, towards stability, which in this case is the active adjustment of an individual with his social and physical environment (Skinner, 1936). Help-seeking behaviour is "The process of actively searching for relevant resources, carried out by a student who considers himself in need of personal, psychological, affective, health or social services, both informal and formal services, in a positive way with the purpose of meeting their needs and solving the problems they carry" (Spendelow & Jose, 2010). The assumption is, should students find it easy to adjust with the (academic) environment, they will be engaged and should issues related to the adjustment and engagement arise, and students seek help, students will be academically wellbeing. To ensure students' academic well-being SUB provides study career advice and counselling, unfortunately, it is recorded that on average only 2 to 5 students seek psychological help.

4. Methodology

To find the solutions, quantitative research to test a theoretical model implying that student college adjustment, academic engagement mediated by help-seeking behaviour determine the students' academic well-being fits with the empirical data, was conducted, involving 235 GT students. Two nationalities, Dutch and Germans, were involved, representing developing countries. Four scales are employed, which are 1) Academic Wellbeing Scale (Borgonovi & Pál, 2016), 2) General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (Wilson, Deane, Ciarrochi, & Rickwood, 2005), 3) The Student Adjustment to College Questionnaire (Baker & Siryk, 1999), and Academic Engagement (Maroco, Maroco, Campos, & Fredricks, 2016) were replicated and modified. Upon tested by a panel of 15 experts from psychological and educational backgrounds, the reliability and validity of all instrument are proven to be above .3 and .7 respectively. The data was analysed by using Structural Equation Model.
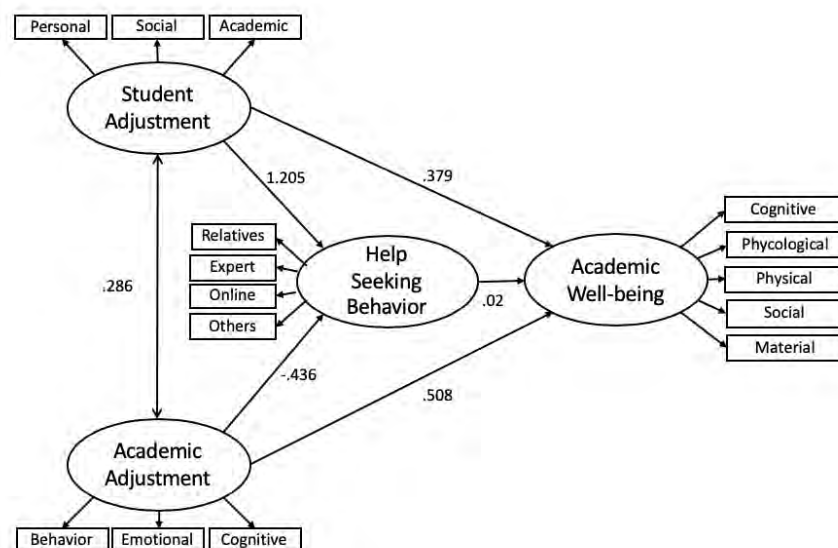
5. Results

The results show that all evidence supports the claim.

Table 1. Goodness of Fit.

Goodness of Fit Measure	Cut of value	Value Generated	Evaluation
Chi Square (X^2)	Expected to be small	17,175	Good
Degree of freedom	Two digits	14	Good
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	1,227	Good
GFI	≥ 0,9	0,982	Good
AGFI	≥ 0,9	0,954	Good
RMR	≤ 0,084	0,028	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0,080	0,031	Good
NFI	.> 0,90	0,961	Good
IFI	≤ 1	0,993	Good
TLI	.> 0,95	0,985	Good
CFI	.> 0,95	0,992	Good
HOELTER	≥ 124	320	Good

The absolute Fit Indices, Incremental Fit Indices, Parsimony Fit Indices tests, conducted and analyzed by employing SEM - Amos generated CMIN/DF value of 1,227, GFI value of 0.982, AGFI value of 0.954, RMR value of 0.028, RMSEA value of 0.031, NFI value of 0.961 IFI value of 0.993, TLI value of 0.985, CFI value of 0.992 and the HOELTER value of 323.

Figure 1. The model.

Results of the hypothesis testing using the standardised regression weight with the significant level *p* of .05, however, show that two of the six assumptions are rejected.

Table 2. Standardized regression weight.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
Academic_Engagement	<---	Student_Adjustment	.286	.086	3.321	***	Accepted
Help-Seeking Behaviour	<---	Academic Engagement	-.436	.203	-2.152	.031	Accepted
Help-Seeking Behaviour	<---	Student Adjustment	-.205	.134	-1.533	.125	Rejected
Academic Well-being	<---	Help-Seeking Behaviour	.020	.057	.347	.728	Rejected
Academic Well-being	<---	Academic_Engagement	.379	.112	3.372	***	Accepted
Academic Well-being	<---	Student_Adjustment	.508	.086	5.879	***	Accepted

Table 2 shows that the student adjustment variable has a significant effect on the academic engagement variable, the academic engagement variable has a significant effect on the help-seeking behaviour variable, the student adjustment variable has no significant effect on the help-seeking behaviour variable, the help-seeking behaviour does not have a significant effect on the academic wellbeing variable, the academic engagement variable has a significant effect on the academic wellbeing variable, and the student adjustment variable has a significant effect on the academic wellbeing variable.

6. Discussion

The fitness of the model shows that student adjustment and academic engagement, when mediated by help-seeking behaviour will determine the students' academic well-being. Thus, it is crucial for STMS to provide assistance for their GT students during their adjustment period to ensure that the students engagement is preserved throughout the module. GT students are also exposed to factors which may influence their adjustment to their new environment in Bali such as culture and language differences, however this does not affect their ability to adapt to the new educational and social environment. The adoption the Netherlands' policy on teaching learning activities does not contribute to issues, except that students feel STMS has been too rigid and strict in the implementation. The use of English as the classroom language, the staff high level of English competency, the Balinese' level of English has also contributed to the speed of the adjustment and intensified the degree of the social interaction, which according to Church (1982) may also determine the adjustment. The 10-week duration of the stay in Bali may also contribute to the adjustment, forces the students to adapt to the new environment as fast as possible. All in all, this condition confirms the statement of Zhou, et al, (2008) that the least issues faced by international students the faster the speed of the acculturation process. In relation to research findings by Iglesias-Benavides, et.al., (2017), in which adjustment is related to students' depression and academic problems, only a few incidents are recorded. Despite the fact that on average up to 20% of the students fail the units, students' academic achievement overall is still above the par indicated by high level of grades. That is why statistically it is not proven that student adjustment significantly correlates with their academic wellbeing.

Confirming statements by Finn and Zimmer, (2012), academic engagement categories, behavioural, emotional and cognitive are proven to be influencing the students' academic well-being. It is recorded, there is a unique pattern in this case. Due to their accessibility, affordability, and the temptation, students mostly spend their night life outside of their accommodation and their weekends in or outside of the island. This has affected their academic well-being. Tutors often express their concern that students do not do the weekly assignments during the CBL or EMBL as expected, such as late completion of homework, the presence of disturbing behaviour, low level of attentiveness, interest and contributions to class discussions. On week six, however, students start showing a high level of engagement. Confirming research findings by Maroco, et al. (2016), the students' engagement can be used as an antidote to low academic achievement, school burnout, insecurity, and dissatisfaction. This new-found engagement has improved the quality of the relationship with friends, teachers and staff; health and physical and psychological well-being (Wang & Eccles, 2012); and ultimately improved the willingness to learn, generating satisfying school achievement as stated by (Reschly & Christenson, 2012).

The management of STMS has provided instrumental support – transportation and accommodation, health related-assistance to health-related information, hospitalization and insurance organization as well as emotional support via the study advisor and even educational support. Out of possible health and physical issues a few are recorded, mostly related to Bali belly and injuries, whereas mental health problems are related to anxiety, depressive and stress symptoms, and interpersonal problems, which mostly started when students were still in their country. The impact can be severe as all module assignments are carried out in groups. One student's problem may turn into a group problem.

Out of 100 students in a module, recorded only two to five students contact the student advisor for psychological/mental assistance. This might be the reasons why statistical analysis does not generate a significant correlation between help-seeking behaviour and academic wellbeing. Data shows that most students would rather go to roommates, friends and family, some would rather convince themselves that focusing on the assignments and exam will distract themselves from the issue. Increasing international students' awareness on the significance in seeking help when facing either personal, physical, and psychological problem to increase the students' well-being is big homework for an educational institution. Short time stay in the university should not be a hindrance since any type of support will be, if not solving, easing the issues. With that in my optimum academic well-being can be reached.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

Despite the fact that the number of international students is small, and that their stay in the developing country is quite short, their well-being should also be prioritised. First of all, the institution should ensure that students are able to adjust to the new life, the education and to the society where they live. Secondly, even though student enjoy the new life with its temptations, students need to increase their awareness on the necessity to focus on the education. The inability to decline invitations to have fun and enjoy the new life, will reduce the students' academic engagement. Low level of engagement will definitely affect their academic achievement. The institution should also be more active encouraging the students to seek a proper help should they face any issue or challenges.

For future research, it is recommended that to see the generality, a replication is conducted for international students who 1) study in other university outside of Bali, Indonesia or Asia, 2) originate from other English-speaking developed countries like the UK, Sweden, Australia or the USA, 3) non-English speaking countries like France, 4) take a degree which means staying longer than merely 10 weeks. It will be not that surprizing it generates different results.

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