

The Influence of Personality Tendency of African Students in China on Their Cross-cultural Adaptation—Empirical Analysis of 7 Universities in Changsha City

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ABSTRACT. *Based on the questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview conducted among African students from seven universities in Changsha, this study aims at describing African students' cross-cultural adaptation in China and analyzing the influence of their disposition on such adaptation from the perspective of personality tendency. The research finds that, from the macro perspective, the holistic cross-cultural adaptation of African students in China is affirmative, and their disposition has a positive impact on their cross-cultural adaptation. From the micro perspective, the social life and social acculturation of African students in China are also sanguine. Although there are some difficulties in African students' social interpersonal adaptation, disposition still has a positive impact on their social life adaptation, social and cultural adaptation and social interpersonal adaptation in China. This study can provide decision-making basis and practical reference for the work of international students in colleges and universities. On the basis of this research, it is proposed that different methods should be adopted for students with different personality tendencies in the management of international students, and attention should be paid to the social and interpersonal communication of international students.*

KEYWORDS: *cross-cultural adaptation, personality tendency, African students*

1. Introduction

In the process of overseas students living in China, how to promote their successful cross-cultural adaptation will not only affect their individual academic completion, but also affect their evaluation of China, which then affects the international image of China. According to statistics from the Ministry of education, a total of 490,000 international students from 196 countries and regions took part in studies, researches, and training in 1,004 institutions as universities, scientific research institutes and other institutions in China in 2018. Consequently, the rapid increase in the number of African students has drawn scholars' attention to this group in recent years.

Cross-cultural adaptation is the primary problem encountered by international students living and studying in foreign countries, which makes it an important research topic in the study of international students. Comparatively, there are few studies on the cross-cultural adaptation of international students from the micro perspective, especially those on African students, which highlights the necessity of such a study.

Therefore, based on the questionnaire data of African students from 7 universities in Changsha and the interviews with 10 of them, this paper takes the cross-cultural adaptation of African students in China as the research topic to explore the influence of personality tendency on African students' cross-cultural adaptation with the method of quantitative and qualitative research. Specifically, this paper attempts to answer whether there are differences in cross-cultural adaptation among African students with extrovert, ambivert and introvert tendencies, and to explore that if there are differences, whether different tendencies affect cross-cultural adaptation and what kind of specific influence they have.

2. Relevant Studies

Through reading and combing the literature, it is found that the current research on cross-cultural adaptation can be briefly classified as follows from various perspectives. From the perspective of research objects, current research mainly involves the cross-cultural adaptation of groups such as international students, immigrant groups and ethnic minorities. From the perspective of research content, current research can be divided into research of theoretical model, current situation, influencing factors, coping strategies and other views. From the perspective of research, the main research perspectives are sociology, anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, cross-cultural communication, pedagogy as well as cross integration of multiple perspectives. As influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation are regarded as the research thesis, they will be discussed in detail.

Cross-cultural adaptation is a complex and dynamic process, in which it is difficult to be influenced or dominated by only one factor. It is usually influenced by various factors from different aspects.

Among the research of foreign scholars, some typical studies are of great significance and should be shared. Lysgard's research on Scandinavians in the United States finds that students who stay longer are more adaptive. He thus proposes that cross-cultural adaptation conforms a "U-shaped curve" (Lysgaard, 1955). Ward examines the issue of cross-cultural adaptation from the social and individual perspectives, proposing that the influencing factors at the social level are the society of origin and the society of residence while the factors at the individual level are the person characteristics and situational characteristics (Ward, 1996).

External factors include: changes of life, social support, cultural distance, discrimination and prejudice, interpersonal interaction level, while internal factors are overseas study experience, knowledge and skills of international students, personality characteristics, personal expectations, motivation to study abroad, and so

on. Among these factors, scholars generally pay attention to cultural distance, social support and language level of students.

In general, the current research on cross-cultural adaptation in China is still in its infancy. Although certain achievements have been made, there are still deficiencies in the following aspects.

From the perspective of research objects, current research on cross-cultural adaptation in China mainly consists of three groups: international students studying in China, Chinese students studying abroad and volunteers of Chinese language teachers. Most of the studies on international students in China regard the international students as a whole, and only very few studies on international students from one continent or one country. Moreover, researchers mainly focus on international students from Japan, South Korea, Thailand and other Asian countries in these limited number of studies. There are relatively few studies on the cross-cultural adaptation of African students in China. For this reason, this research on African students can make up for the lack of the variety of research objects.

From the perspective of research content, the various influencing factors of cross-cultural adaptation have been combed and summarized by relevant researches from internal and external aspects, thus the research has reached a certain breadth. In contrast, there are few studies that deeply explore one of the influencing factors, and even fewer that focus on personality tendency. Therefore, discussing the influence of personality tendency on cross-cultural adaptation can make up for the deficiency of research content.

From the perspective of research regions, Chinese scholars' research on overseas students in China mostly focuses on first-tier cities such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, as which Changsha enjoys the same international reputation, but also has its own comparative advantages in development. As a major educational province in China, Hunan has formed an educational pattern with Changsha-Zhuzhou-XiangTan city as the center, in which Changsha, as the provincial capital, has gathered numerous high-quality educational resources. Compared with the developed coastal cities in China, the education of overseas students in Hunan province started relatively late. However, after years of steady development, the number of overseas students in Hunan province has gradually increased, the range of student sources has gradually expanded, and the nature of overseas students has become more diverse. As an important node city in the "One Belt And One Road" initiative, Changsha has been actively carrying out economic cooperation and trade with African countries in recent years, and is open to African universities in education. Therefore, investigating African students in Changsha is of research significance, which can also make up for the shortage of research region.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Data source

As the object of this paper is African students in Changsha, the questionnaires

were launched in seven universities extracted according to their level of running. These universities are: Central South University, Hunan University, Hunan Normal University, Changsha University of Science & Technology, Hunan University Of Technology and Business, Hunan University Of Chinese Medicine and Changsha Medical University. Then 20-40 African students were randomly selected from each university by RDS sampling method to fill in the questionnaire. In this survey, a total of 250 paper questionnaires were issued, and 238 questionnaires were recovered, with a recovery rate of 95.2%. After screening and eliminating invalid questionnaires, a total of 199 valid questionnaires were recovered, with an effective recovery rate of 79.6%.

3.2 Variable definition and measurement

3.2.1 Dependent variable: Cross-cultural adaptation

The definition of "cross-cultural adaptation" by American anthropologists Redfield, Linton and Herskovits has been widely accepted and recognized by the academic circle at present: Cross-cultural adaptation is composed of individuals, referring to a change of one or two cultural patterns caused by the continuous and direct cultural contact between groups with different cultures (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936). From the perspective of the components of cross-cultural adaptation, Ward and other researchers think that cross-cultural adaptation consists of two dimensions which are psychological adaptation and social cultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1992). On the basis of this theory, Ward also puts forward the "ABC model" of cross-cultural adaptation, that is, emotion, behavior and cognition are the three elements of cross-cultural adaptation (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001).

However, the adaptation problems encountered by international students during their study and life in other countries are more diverse and extensive. Cross-cultural adaptation is divided into three dimensions according to the common scenes in life: social and cultural adaptation, social life adaptation and social interpersonal adaptation, which are presented in the form of Likert scale. According to the results of SPSS statistical analysis, the overall reliability of this part of the questionnaire is $\alpha = 0.852$.

3.2.2 Independent variable: Personality tendency

In this paper, personality tendency is taken as independent variable, and Internal External Control Scale in Eysenck Personality Questionnaire compiled by H. J. Eysenck is used to measure the personality tendency of African students in China. There are 21 items in the scale, which are divided into "yes" and "no". According to the scoring rules of this scale, if the score is higher than 15, it is extroversion tendency; if the score is between 7 and 15, it is intermediate tendency; if the score is lower than 7, it is introversion tendency. According to the results of SPSS statistical

analysis, the overall reliability of this part of the questionnaire is $\alpha = 0.719$.

3.2.3 Control variable: Basic information of African students in China

The control variables involved in this paper are the basic information of African students in China, including gender, age, marital status, school, major and time of coming to China.

4. Findings

African students with different personality tendencies show significant differences in adaptation in various aspects.

In terms of holistic adaptation, most of the African students with introverted and intermediate personality tendencies expressed "general adaptation", while most of the African students with extroverted personality tendency expressed "good adaptation", in terms of holistic adaptation, African students with extroverted personality tendency showed significantly better adaptation.

In terms of cultural adaptation and life adaptation, there is little difference in the proportion of African students with different personality tendencies who choose "general adaptation" and "good adaptation". On the whole, the cultural adaptation and life adaptation of African students show a good trend. Therefore, there are relatively few problems and difficulties in these two aspects, among which the extroverted students tend to have a better acculturation.

In terms of interpersonal adaptation, the adaptation of African students with intermediate and extroverted personality tendencies is significantly better than that of those with introverted disposition. More than half of African students with introverted personality said that they had difficulty in interpersonal adaptation in China and encountered many problems in communicating with Chinese people.

5. Regression analysis on the personality tendency and adaptation of African students -- hypothesis test

In order to further explore the influence of African students' personality tendency on their cross-cultural adaptation and to verify the previous hypothesis, a regression analysis is conducted on African students' personality tendency and holistic adaptation score, acculturation score, life adaptation score and interpersonal adaptation score. The statistical results are shown in Table 1.

The scores of personality tendency and holistic adaptation of African students: $R^2 = 0.090$, $F = 19.561$, $\beta = 0.301$, $P < 0.05$. It can be inferred from the model characteristics that the personality tendency is positively correlated with the holistic adaptation, that is, the more extroverted the African students are, the better their holistic adaptation in China will be. The scores of personality and cultural adaptation:

$R^2 = 0.033$, $F = 6.828$, $\beta = 0.183$, $P < 0.05$. It can be inferred from the model characteristics that the personality tendency is positively correlated with the cultural adaptation, that is, the more extroverted the African students are, the better their cultural adaptation in China will be. The scores of personality tendency and life adaptation: $R^2 = 0.021$, $F = 4.327$, $\beta = 0.147$, $P < 0.05$. It can be inferred from the model characteristics that the personality tendency is positively correlated with the life adaptation, that is, the more extroverted the African students are, the better their life adaptation in China will be. The scores of personality tendency and interpersonal adaptation: $R^2 = 0.153$, $F = 35.527$, $\beta = 0.391$, $P < 0.05$. It can be inferred from the model characteristics that the personality tendency is positively correlated with the interpersonal adaptation, that is, the more extroverted the African students are, the better their interpersonal adaptation in China will be.

Based on the analysis above, personality tendency has a positive impact on the holistic adaptation, cultural adaptation, life adaptation and interpersonal adaptation. The hypothesis and three sub-hypotheses are established.

Table 1: Regression analysis of personality tendency and adaptation of African students (n = 199)

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Inspection result			Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	T	Significance
		R ²	F	Significance	B	Standard error	Beta		
Holistic adaptation	Disposition	0.09	19.561	0	0.779	0.176	0.301	4.423	0
Cultural adaptation	Disposition	0.033	0.029	0.01	0.14	0.054	0.183	2.613	0.01
Adaptation to life	Disposition	0.021	4.327	0.039	0.154	0.074	0.147	2.08	0.039
Interpersonal adaptation	Disposition	0.153	35.527	0	0.484	0.081	0.391	5.96	0

6. Conclusion

Through questionnaire and semi-structured interview, it is found that African students' personality tendency has an impact on their cross-cultural adaptation. African students with different personality tendencies show significant differences in overall adaptation, cultural adaptation, life adaptation and interpersonal adaptation. Disposition has a positive impact on these four aspects, and the hypotheses made before the investigation are established. In addition to the successful verification of the hypothesis, the poor adaptation of African students in social interaction, especially the difficulties and problems encountered by the introverted African students also attracts Chinese scholars' attention.

The differences in cross-cultural adaptation of African students with different personalities remind people that, in addition to formulating unified management methods and standards, colleges and universities should also consciously pay attention to the differences in adaptation of international students with different

personalities, and targeted to help them to solve the difficulties in their life and study so that they can better complete the cross-cultural adaptation. While paying attention to the life and cultural adaptation of African students, attention should also be paid to their interpersonal adaptation. Whether African students who are far away from their motherland and going to other places can have good cross-cultural interpersonal communication with the local people will affect their life, learning quality and psychological state. To help African students to better adapt to social interaction requires not only their own initiative, but also the Chinese people to change their stereotype and attitude towards African students.

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