

Culture shock? Beijing Foreign Studies University Study Unveils New Insights into Emotional intercultural adjustment

Research emphasizes that emotional intercultural adjustment implies multiple facets, rather than being confined to the conceptualization of "culture shock."

SHANGHAI, SHANGHAI, CHINA, April 8, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Emotions play a critical role in international students' intercultural adjustment processes. A critical review by a researcher from Beijing Foreign Studies University examines the evolution of research on this topic. Initially focused on the concept of "culture shock," the field now explores the personal growth value and sociocultural complexities of emotions. The study emphasizes the importance of taking a more inclusive conceptual horizon of emotions in empowering international students and advancing intercultural education programs to promote global social transformation.



Emotional intercultural adjustment moves beyond "culture shock", highlighting growth and complexity on individual and social levels.

Emotions reveal individuals' important goals and action tendencies as they adjust to environmental changes, playing a pivotal role in facilitating social integration and cohesion. However, academic discussions on the emotional phenomena in intercultural adjustment contexts have long been constrained within the "culture shock" paradigm.

Dr. Weijia Zheng from Beijing Foreign Studies University published a groundbreaking literature review study in [ECNU Review of Education](#) on January 2, 2025, which presents a systematic examination of changes in research approaches regarding international students' emotional intercultural adjustment over the past three decades. The findings suggest that existing studies have gradually extended research horizons, from detecting and addressing the problematic nature of emotion (manifested as "culture shock"), to uncovering and promoting its potential in personal development, and finally toward an emerging trend of acknowledging and embracing the dialectics and sociocultural complexities of emotional adjustment. This trajectory illustrates

an "affective turn" in intercultural adjustment research with enhanced attention to the multiple facets of emotional adjustment.

"The significant role of emotions in intercultural adjustment has often been undervalued. Through this literature review research and my other empirical investigations, I aim to provide more holistic and broader perspectives to examine the multidimensional nature and value of emotional intercultural adjustment." commented by Dr. Zheng.

The study concurrently identifies a prevailing tendency in the mainstream literature to investigate emotional adjustment phenomena through a conventional problem-centric theoretical lens. Such an approach predominantly focuses on universal stress-coping mechanisms while inadequately addressing the social embeddedness and multiple developmental potentials of emotional intercultural adjustment, thereby limiting their practical relevance to real-world intercultural experiences. In response, the research advocates for adopting a more holistic, balanced, and context-sensitive theoretical perspective to expand the boundaries of existing research and strengthen its potential to understand and guide international educational practice.

"Developing a more inclusive conceptual horizon of emotions is crucial for enhancing international students' agency during their adjustment process, advancing intercultural education programs, and promoting meaningful social transformation in our globalized world." Dr. Zheng concluded.

Reference

Titles of original papers: Feelings About Intercultural Development: A Review of Research on International Students' Intercultural Adjustment Experiences From an Emotion Perspective

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