

.Research Article

Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Intercultural Sensitivity of Students in a Chinese University

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Abstract:

This study investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity of international students and chinese students in a university of china. A total 233 students participated. 122 students were chinese and 111 students were international students. English version of wong and law emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS), and chen and starosta's (2000) intercultural sensitivity scale (ISS) were directly used to measure the emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity of international students while they were translated into chinese for chinese students. The results showed that there were no significant differences in emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity based on gender, foreign experience and length of stay in china. International students were significantly higher in both emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity than chinese students after controlling for age differences and educational level. Emotional intelligence was positively correlated with intercultural sensitivity and it had 52.5% predictive ability on intercultural sensitivity.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Intercultural Sensitivity, International Students, Chinese Students.

Introduction:

The globalization and internalization break the boarder difference of the culture. More than 190 million people worldwide live outside their country of birth or citizenship (Martin & Zürcher, 2008). People need to be competent to interact and communicate with people from different cultural background because it could be the important part of all professional lives (Chen, 2010). On the other hand, different culture and background is regarded as a sensitive issue when dealing and interacting with other people from distinct race and religion regarding the appropriateness of behavior of one culture might

be different from another culture (Tamam, 2010; Cushner&Brislin, 1996). Students are people who are living together with people from different backgrounds and need to interact with each other. Therefore, international students as well as local students could perceive cultural difference as an opportunity or threat during cross-cultural interaction (Saber, 2012) Nowadays, because of the development of the society and education system in China, the number of international students attending colleges and universities in China has increased significantly and some foreign teachers come to China for giving lectures, contributing and discussing their knowledge and experience, etc. Therefore, Chinese students usually have the opportunity to

communicate with foreigners and face more intercultural communication and international relations. They also need to interact with people from different culture and exercise to develop intercultural sensitivity as a requirement for harmonious relations. On the other hand, since international students have different cultural background, they will face many adjustment problems when they enter in colleges and universities. International students from different parts of the world exchange their intellectual resources not only to close to each other's culture but also to respect and understand other cultures. According to Matsumoto et al. (2005), people need to regulate their emotions and accept changes in one's life and be open minded to success their adjustment in other culture. Therefore, international students' and local students' emotional competencies can overcome the difficulties that they face in their adjustment to new cultures.

Review Of Literature

Emotional Intetelligence Intercultural Sensitivity And Intercultural Communication

People could interpret differently in the same situation according to the emotions they experienced in a given situation (Hareli, Shomrat, & Biger, 2005). To communicate with each other, students need high level of adjustment-related stressor in order to encounter conflict potential (Chen, 1999). Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2000) found that success of life is determined by 80% on emotional intelligence (EI) and only 20% on intellect.

Neuropsychological study showed that emotion has an important role to be adaptive in social behavior (Forgas & George, 2001), as well as, in cross-cultural interaction. It is a useful tool to prevent causes of negative communication pattern. People who have a desire to experience new and novel things, tend to have higher intercultural communication competence than no sensation seekers (Arasaratnam & Banerjee, 2011). Different emotions can produce different performance (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Negative emotion disturbs intercultural experiences and it is important to understand and regulate emotion to succeed in intercultural interaction (Matsumoto et al., 2003). The ability to understand one own emotional reactions and that of other and use this information to regulate one's emotions not only to make good decisions but also to guide actions in a given situation

is defined as emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Nasir (2012) theoretically denoted emotional intelligence as "an assortment of skills related to self-discipline, determination, self-motivation and sensitivity to the feelings of others" (p.276). Emotionally intelligent students are more successful to adapt in new culture. They can manage, recognize, and respond their feeling well, tolerate frustration, and be less impulsive. People with high EI will have less defensive tactics during communication because it can reduce harmful effect of ambiguity and stress (Forgas & George, 2001). On the other hand, intercultural sensitivity can develop the ability to understand and appreciate different cultures and produce appropriate behavior in intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 1997). According to Chen and Starosta (1997), the main concept of intercultural sensitivity is personal aspiration of people to appreciate different cultures and cultural norms which are not the same with theirs. Individual with high intercultural sensitivity will be able to reduce resistance which is caused by the difference (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). People with higher intercultural sensitivity are better to project and receive positive emotional responses before, during, and after interactions (Gagnon & Cornelius, 2002) and have high intercultural competence (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Black, 1990; Chen & Starosta, 2000; Klak & Martin, 2003). People who are sensitive in intercultural communication have positive emotion that comprehend and respect different cultures (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992). Therefore, emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity are considerable in achieving competent intercultural interaction.

Research Interest And Questions:

According to review of literatures, emotional intelligence plays an important part in cultural adjustment. There are many previous research studies that revealed the relationship between emotional intelligence and various factors in education, psychology, adjustment, health, etc. (Nasir, 2012). However, no research has been done on the relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity and no research has been done to compare international students' and Chinese students' levels of emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity in China. Moreover, there are only nineteen published articles on intercultural

sensitivity in China (Huang & Wang, 2013).

This study hypothesized that there is positive relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity. The research questions that drive this study are as follows:

- (1) Are there differences in students' emotional intelligence based on gender and foreign experience?
- (2) Are there differences in students' intercultural sensitivity based on gender and foreign experience?
- (3) Are there differences between emotional intelligence of international students and that of Chinese student after controlling age differences and education level?
- (4) Are there differences between international students' intercultural sensitivity and Chinese students' intercultural sensitivity after controlling age differences and educational level?
- (5) Is there a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity of international students and Chinese students?

Method:

The survey was conducted to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity of international students and Chinese students in Northeast Normal University (NENU).

Participants:

The participants were totally 233 students in NENU. Among them, 122 were Chinese students (54 male and 68 female) and 111 were international students (64 male and 47 female). The average age of the 203 participants (30 students missed to fill their age) was 24.41 ($SD = 4.482$). There are 97 undergraduates (88 Chinese and 9 international students), 91 masters (28 Chinese and 63 international students), 41 Ph.D students (6 Chinese and 35 international students). 9 students missed to filling their education level.

Instruments:

The researchers used two scales: Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) and intercultural sensitivity scale (ISS) with 5 point likert scale: SA = "strongly agree", A = "agree", N = "neutral", D = "disagree" and SD = "strongly disagree". The researchers used English version for international students and Chinese version for

Chinese students. Demographic variables such as gender, educational level, experiences of study abroad, etc. were added in front of the WLEIS and ISS in order to find out the differences between groups. Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS; Wong & Law, 2002) consists of 16-items with four dimensions: self-emotion appraisal, others' emotion appraisal, use of emotion, and regulation of emotion. The total score of these 16 items represented students' emotional intelligence and the high scores mean the high emotional intelligence. Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) consists of 24 items with five dimensions: interaction engagement, interaction confidence, respect for cultural differences, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse-coded items. The reliabilities of the four scales WLEIS (Chinese version), WLEIS (English version), ISS (Chinese version) and ISS (English version) were 0.89, 0.88, 0.863 and 0.739 respectively.

Results:

For research question 1 and 2, to find the differences in students' emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity based on gender and foreign experience, independent sample t-test was used. The results showed that males and females were not significantly different in emotional intelligence ($M_{\text{male}} = 3.8$, $SD_{\text{male}} = 0.58$, $M_{\text{female}} = 3.74$, $SD_{\text{female}} = 0.56$), $t(231) = 0.744$, $p > 0.05$ and in intercultural sensitivity ($M_{\text{male}} = 3.76$, $SD_{\text{male}} = 0.41$, $M_{\text{female}} = 3.71$, $SD_{\text{female}} = 0.44$), $t(231) = 1.007$, $p > 0.05$.

For foreign experience, international students and Chinese students were analyzed separately because international students have already possessed foreign experience. Moreover, international students' foreign experience was divided into experience before coming China and length of stay in China and was calculated separately.

The finding showed there were no significant differences between Chinese students with foreign experience and without foreign experience on emotional intelligence ($M_{\text{noexperience}} = 3.53$, $SD_{\text{noexperience}} = 0.52$, $M_{\text{experience}} = 3.74$, $SD_{\text{experience}} = 0.61$), $t(120) = -1.739$, $p > 0.05$ and on intercultural sensitivity ($M_{\text{noexperience}} = 3.58$, $SD_{\text{noexperience}} = 0.42$, $M_{\text{experience}} = 3.75$, $SD_{\text{experience}} = 0.44$), $t(120) = -1.725$, $p > 0.05$.

According to foreign experience before coming

China, there were no significant differences in international students' emotional intelligence ($M_{\text{noexperience}} = 4.07$, $SD_{\text{noexperience}} = 0.47$, $M_{\text{experience}} = 3.94$, $SD_{\text{experience}} = 0.55$), $t(109) = 1.302$, $p > 0.05$ and international students' intercultural sensitivity ($M_{\text{noexperience}} = 3.80$, $SD_{\text{noexperience}} = 0.39$, $M_{\text{experience}} = 3.93$, $SD_{\text{experience}} = 0.35$), $t(109) = -1.828$, $p > 0.05$.

To examine the variations in international students' emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity in terms of length of stay in China, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was computed. According to ANOVA results, there were also no significant differences between the international students' length of stay in China both on emotional intelligence, $F(3,107) = 0.799$, $p > 0.05$ and on intercultural sensitivity, $F(3,107) = 0.211$, $p > 0.05$

For research question 3 and 4, to find the differences between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity of international students and that of Chinese students after controlling for age differences and educational level, ANCOVA was used. The results indicated that after controlling for age differences and education level, there was significant difference in emotional intelligence, $F(1, 202) = 5.853$, $p < 0.05$ and the covariates (age and educational level) did not have significant effect on emotional intelligence (See Table 1). This indicated that international students ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.48$) had higher emotional intelligence than Chinese students ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.54$)

Table 1. Tests Of Between-Subjects Effects On Emotional Intelligence

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	0.065	1	0.065	0.249	0.618
Education level	0.725	1	0.725	2.798	0.096
Student type	1.517	1	1.517	5.853	0.016

For intercultural sensitivity, there was also significant difference in student type (international students and Chinese students), $F(1,202) = 5.99$, $p < 0.05$ and the covariates (age and educational level) did not have significant effect on intercultural sensitivity (See Table.2). This indicated that international students ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.37$) were also higher in intercultural sensitivity than Chinese students ($M = 3.62$, $SD =$

0.43) after controlling age differences and educational level among them.

Table 2. Tests Of Between-Subjects Effects On Intercultural Sensitivity

	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Age	0.089	1	0.089	0.538	0.464
Education level	0.003	1	0.003	0.02	0.889
Student type	0.988	1	0.988	5.99	0.015

For research question 5, to find whether there was a relationship between emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity, correlation was used. The results showed that emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity were significantly and strongly correlated, $r = 0.726$, $p < 0.001$. The researchers calculated regression analysis in order to know how intercultural sensitivity could be predicted by emotional intelligence because these two variables were strongly correlated. This signified that emotional intelligence significantly predicted intercultural sensitivity ($F(1,234) = 261.11$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient was 0.609. Therefore, 0.609 point will increase in intercultural sensitivity when every point increases in emotional intelligence. The adjusted R square was 0.525. So, 52.5% variation of intercultural sensitivity can be predicted by emotional intelligence. (See Table.3)

Table 3. Regression Analysis Of Emotional Intelligence On Intercultural Sensitivity

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.419	0.143		9.927	.000
	0.609	0.038	0.726	16.159	.000

According to results of linear regression analysis, the resultant model could be identified as the following equation;

$$Y' = 1.419 + 0.609 X$$

Discussion, Conclusion And Future Research:

This study confirms that there is no significant difference considering gender on emotional intelligence in contrary with most of the studies that have been conducted. Most of studies revealed that female are more emotionally intelligent than male

(Pooja, Kumar, 2016; Berrocal, Cabello, Castillo, and Extremer, 2012; Naik& Kiran, 2018). Moreover, male and female students are not significantly different in intercultural sensitivity. This finding is consistent with Takwa Bosuwon's (2017) study that suggested that intercultural sensitivity was not affected by gender. Foreign experience and length of stay in China do not contribute significantly to intercultural sensitivity and emotional intelligence. This is consistent with the findings of Taylor and Henao (2006), Fabregas, Kelsey, and Robinson (2012) and Chocce, Johnson and Yossatorn (2015) that revealed intercultural sensitivity were not significantly contributed by individual's experience in other cultures. However, international students are higher in both emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity regardless of education level and age. It suggests that international students are aware of their emotion in everyday life because they interact and adjust with different people from different cultural background. The reason of the appearance of such result might be people's daily exposure to different cultures which will help them to develop their emotional intelligence. Although Chinese students also have foreign experience, their exposure to other cultures might be different from that of international students who study in China in that their abroad experience is concerned with temporary travelling, but not long time study. Finally, the researchers conclude that emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity have strong positive correlation and 52.5% of intercultural sensitivity can be predicted by emotional intelligence. So, emotional intelligence is an important factor in cultivating intercultural sensitivity. Therefore, when people cultivate their emotion and well apply in communication, successful interaction and communication will occur. There is no block for people to engage in productive social experiences. The researchers recommend the following because there are some limitations in this study. First, all the data in this research are collected in NENU and the sample size is small. It cannot represent international students and Chinese students in the whole China. So, further researchers should use larger sample and can conduct in other universities and in other areas of China. Second, the scales are self-report assessment and the researchers cannot avoid the social desirability bias. Future researches can use other method such as interviews to get more

information and accurate the findings. Third, most of Chinese students are undergraduate students and international students are graduate students in this study. It might be other factors that affect on emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity. Last, according to Peng (2006), students who have good English skills are more confident and enjoy interacting with people from different cultural background than students who do not have. Therefore, language proficiency might be one of the reasons of high intercultural sensitivity in international students. Future researchers should concentrate on these factors.

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